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St. Abigail of the Pines

Winnifred Knight

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Medora M. Bybee

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**SAINT ABIGAIL OF
THE PINES**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Love Watch

*The Song of Our
Syrian Guest*

THE PILGRIM PRESS



"JEST wait till Dick Endicott's a Cap'n!"

[Page 35]

S A I N T A B I G A I L
OF
T H E P I N E S

BY
WILLIAM ALLEN KNIGHT

FRONTISPICE BY
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TO THE MEMORY OF

SYLVIA

*I recall that June-time Sabbath,
How the sky was wondrous blue
When, the village service over,
I rode home from church with you ;
Yon street was cloudless in the sun —
And I was nearing twenty-one.*

*Now again a sunlit Sabbath
Glows on church and man's abode ;
You are sleeping in the churchyard —
Yonder winds the homeward road ;
And still the sky is wondrous blue —
Twice twenty-one is forty-two !*

*What blessing came I little knew
When I rode home, dear heart, with you.*

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I	
<i>Introducing My Friend, Captain Cotter</i>	1
II	
<i>Where the Story was Told</i>	15
III	
<i>“A Boy’s Will Is The Wind’s Will” . . .</i>	29
IV	
<i>A Sea-Song Heard in the Dark</i>	39
V	
<i>The Tide Coming In</i>	49
VI	
<i>Full Tide</i>	65
VII	
<i>Ebb Tide</i>	73
VIII	
<i>Borne out with the Tide</i>	83
IX	
<i>The Battle with Whales</i>	93
[vii]	

CONTENTS

	PAGE
X	
<i>Another Battle and a Victory</i>	117
XI	
<i>The Way of the Transgressor is Hard</i>	135
XII	
<i>The Highland Light</i>	145
XIII	
<i>“Even the Wind and the Sea”</i>	153
XIV	
<i>A Vision Beautiful</i>	163
XV	
<i>All’s Well</i>	173

I

*Introducing My Friend,
Captain Cotter*

SAINT ABIGAIL OF THE PINES

I

*Introducing My Friend,
Captain Cotter*

A LONG curve of warm shore sand dozing in the sun till the tide should come back ; flocks of white sea-fowl lighting and flying up here and there along the beach ; out in the shimmer of the sea the stakes of the fish-weirs dotting the water ; and a fleckless sky over all. Down the shore, like a speck on the white border of the ocean's blue mantle, you might have seen a man lying in the sand.

I had let the boats leave me behind that afternoon when they put off for the lobster-pots and the nets ; for the day

S A I N T A B I G A I L

was so fine that the old men from the sparse cottages of Seaconnet were sure to stroll down to the beach. Who that has listened to the talk of sea veterans needs to be told why I was wishing to stay ashore when they were likely to gather ?

No sounds were in the wide summerliness of the air but the voice of the sea and the far call of the white birds. These even more than silence lend themselves to dozing and dreams, as you may find any summer day on the shore of Seaconnet. So it was that at length a voice singing softly as out of a dream found my ear.

“ In the — beauty — o’ — the lilies — ”

Very low was the monotone as it blended with the murmur of the water and made me mindful again of the shore. There was a pause. Then the voice haltingly rose to the ascent set by the tune :

OF THE PINES

“Christ — was — born — across the — sea.”

The singer ceased. Peering from the shelter of my cap I saw an old man standing shoe-deep in the sand. He was not aware that any one was near; for as he lingered with bent form, gazing seaward, his quavering voice sounded on the beach as with the swell of feeling :

“With a — glo-ry — in his — bosom — that —
transfigers — you — an’ me.”

Once more he was silent with his eyes far out to sea. Then he turned and began to trudge on in the sand. Soon he stopped with a surprised face and stood staring down on me.

“Ship ahoy!” was his first word; and his tone was cheery enough to make the scene of his singing on the beach seem only a dream. He lifted the cap from my face with playful care and said :

“Be’n on the lookout for’ard fur ye

S A I N T A B I G A I L

this hour an' more." Then the pleasant shore of Seaconnet was like a paradise to me; for Captain Cotter had come.

If you had known the captain you would not need to be told why his coming was enough to add charm even to the spell of sea and sky; and you would understand why no sign was given by word or look that I had heard him singing alone on the beach. But from that day onward I did not cease to wonder.

There were three old men in sight now moving toward us on the beach.

Very droll was their way of greeting as one drew near another treading heavily through the sand; only a word or two spoken with eyes looking seaward or skyward, a mere word or two about some weather-sign or the boats working among the weirs, and then silence. They were as unhasting in coming to speech as Arabs meeting

OF THE PINES

in the desert and slowly dismounting from tall camels. This way of theirs set me thinking how they too had learned it from days and nights far out in desert solitude.

But in time they would find their way to words, these old men of the ocean waste; then it would be like taking the wings of the morning, so swiftly did their memories flit across trackless waters.

In lighter vein they talked at first.

“So your Joe’s last boy’s got spliced,” Uncle Zeb began.

“Married a good lass, too, ef I’m a jedge on ’t,” answered Captain Job Coan with shrill voice.

“D’ y’ ever hear ’bout how they do it out in Japan?” returned Uncle Zeb; for Captain Zebulun Hopkins had rounded Cape Horn in his day. “The lad gits a green branch an’ makes it fast to his sweetheart’s house. Ef her folks take it in, he’s tuk.

S A I N T A B I G A I L

Ef it hangs there till it withers,
he knows an' ev'rybudy knows he ain't
tuk."

Captain Coan chuckled. "My Moses!" he said, shaking his head. "Puts me in mind o' what — a feller tol' me — who shipped in the *Storm Queen* onc't — when I was third mate aboard o' her. Come from Car'liny, an' said they do it this way, back — in the — mount'ins."

As the old man finished the story he broke out in thin tones of mirth and brought down his hand on the top of his cane thrice, nodding with each stroke. Then the graybeards laughed together.

Many a quaint tale was told after that; and it was like peeping into queer nooks of the world for me.

Nothing was more to my liking in those summer days than to set these spent seafarers telling of their life afloat when storms had given them battle. Of this they were slow to

OF THE PINES

speak by their own choice. But how their talk flowed on, if I had luck in setting them off! In such a case they were sure to forget me ere long. Then I liked it best of all while they discussed among themselves the haps and mishaps of long ago.

“Dan'l,” the grave colloquy ran, “d' ye s'pose she might hev righted herself, after all, ef Dave hed cut away that anchor rope? I 've oft-times won'ered why he did n't.”

While Daniel pondered his answer, the old man's questioning face was eager as a child's, though he had clung to the bottom of that capsized craft more than fifty years before and had seen poor Dave washed away forever from the anchor rope which for some reason he did not cut.

So we sat in the sun, waiting to hear about the run of fish when the boats came in. There was silence for a time, and we looked off to the weirs

S A I N T A B I G A I L

where we could see the men still at work in the glistening field which the sun was slowly shifting over the waters.

It was Daniel who called us back. “But did n’t Dave’s widow take the tiller’s well’s any woman ye ever see? The’ ain’t be’n no purtier piece o’ pluck in all Seaconnet than the way she brung up her chil’ern an’ beat her way into harbor, ’s Parson Avery called it in her fun’ral sermon.”

Captain Cotter, who had been a listener till now, seemed to be moved to speech by these words. “Yes,” he began, “I’ve ofttimes won’ered ’bout what the parson said. ‘T is easy ‘nough,’ said he, ‘fur us to be cheerful an’ hearty in the way we do things, ef the wind’s right an’ the tide’s runnin’ our way — easy ‘nough, then,’ said he, ‘but ’t is when the gale’s stiff ag’in’ ye, an’ ye’re left to beat your course in alone, an’ port’s a long way off,

OF THE PINES

an' maybe, like her, your mainm'st 's overboard — then 's when ye show what your heart 's good fur,' said he."

There was a tone in Captain Cotter's voice which set me querying. Why did such a saying mean so much to him? As I lay in the warm sand listening to the voices, that question moved me to peer at his face from the shade of my cap. His eyes met mine; and their look was wistful beyond the wont of men.

Of all the men along that coast old whalemen came to be my choice for a tale. It may be that this was so in part because Captain Cotter had been a harpooner. Yet, take it all in all, there is no life afloat so story-laden as the whaler's.

Such men's eyes are as sea-glasses if you know how to use them. While they talk you can look from the decks of whale-ships in the uttermost parts of the sea until, if you listen well, you

S A I N T A B I G A I L

make out the ship's little boats off in the ocean's sheen through the haze of sixty years, and see the spray fly as they rush in on the shining black masses of floating flesh and hurl their harpoons. Give me old whalemen for a tale !

But the best they ever told me is one from the lips of my friend, Captain Jason Cotter of Seaconnet. He is gone now. You no longer see his bent form along that glowing shore. It may be there is no reason now for keeping his story untold. But for long that has not been clear. Did he not tell this tale to me only, so far as I ever heard ? And did he not let our friendship ripen and mellow all summer long before he spoke of what lay back of that song on the beach and the wistful look he gave me afterward ? Moreover, his story uncovered a secret love that was wonderful, passing the love of women !

OF THE PINES

Yet, as often as I go to Seaconnet the tale he told is heard in the voice of the sea hard by and in the singing, the strangely merry singing, of the breeze. “Tell it,” they seem to be saying, “it must not die with him; tell it — tell it.”

And the calling sea and the singing breeze of Seaconnet shall have their way.

II

Where the Story was Told

II

Where the Story was Told

WOULD you find Seaconnet and see the spot to which Captain Cotter led on the day when he told me his story? Go eastward from the Providence Plantations, where black "mammies" singing at the kitchen doors watch the turkeys spreading their feathers to the breeze fresh from the bay; still eastward over the island ridge where Dutch windmills wave their long arms as with open palms, sending friendly messages all day long to white lighthouses basking in the sunshine down the shore. There, where the land lies dreaming, lulled to sleep in the blue-veined arms of the sea, you will find Seaconnet.

Though its sandy roads and sunny shorelands lie in my memory only with summer days holding a canopy of blue

S A I N T A B I G A I L

sky over it and clasping it about with the deeper blue of shining sea-waters, I do not doubt that Seaconnet is lone and drear in winter. For Captain Cotter said one summer's day as we trudged on over the hazy sand-hills, "The spell o' the sky is on it, sir, now; 't is a drear neck o' land in winter." And if you could have known Captain Cotter as I did, you would understand why his word was enough for me.

Indeed, the way has not seemed quite clear to say that the earth is round, since a day when we two stood near the surf and he set his eye with a far-away look on the ocean and pointed with his blunt forefinger to show that such a notion could be harbored only in the mind of a landsman.

So I do not scruple to say that when winter has broken the spell of the summer's wooing and blasts are abroad and the sea round about is black and moaning against a tormenting sky, the thin

OF THE PINES

pasture slopes and winding roads of Seaconnet are bleak and dismal indeed. Yet nothing tests my faith in things unseen more keenly. For Seaconnet is the fairest summer land I know.

“What do you do, captain, when the spell of the sky is gone and it is winter in Seaconnet?” I asked, as we tramped on toward a spot he was wishing to show me.

A smile started under his shaggy eyebrows and broke somewhere in his grizzled beard.

“I go moonshinin’ somew’at oft,” he answered. “Sometimes when I’ve turned in o’ nights, I hear the sea callin’, callin’ through the dark, an’ after twelve o’clock ’r thereabouts I git out an’ cruise along the beach, never knowin’ what treasure I may pick up next. I hev a kind o’ manie fur it. I s’pose ef I hed a million I’d still go moonshinin’.”

Slowly he went on telling of what

S A I N T A B I G A I L

he had found in this lonely roaming on the beach, when, before morning brought to the eye of some passer-by the fresh forage of the waves, he was there to receive the booty they tossed up on the sand, like jolly robbers reckless of the fate of vanquished ships sunken or adrift.

But the lone old man on the beach did not share their sounding mirth. He was always very grave in these midnight roamings, though I have seen him lightsome and playful in a quiet way when the sun was shining.

More than once he had said to me, “I’ve al’ays be’n fearsome lest I might come on a budy, but I’ve had luck so fur.”

A queer light was in his eyes as he made such remarks. I noticed this long before its meaning was understood. I used to think it was a token of childlikeness back of his manhood’s weathered bravery. Others had told

OF THE PINES

me he was an old harpooner, but no one knew what lay in his past. He never talked of himself. But that strange light in his eyes kept me wondering.

In the heart of this charmed nook of land is a small burying-ground, slumberous and old. We saw its low stones over the clumps of bayberry, and Captain Cotter's step as we neared the enclosure was changed as if he would go softly.

There, under a lone elm that seemed to bend in sheltering sympathy over the spot, were three gravestones. The old man stopped before them, removed his cap, and gave me a wordless look as if to say that he had fulfilled his promise. Little did I know of the secret locked in his breast as I fell to pondering those stones.

They stood, and indeed still stand, close together. So intimately nestled

S A I N T A B I G A I L

are they that the same tall tuft of grass casts its shadow on each of them as the sun of a summer's day glides through the sky of Seaconnet.

A feeling of awe gave me pause while cutting away the lichen that the lettering might be read more surely. Once when the mysterious words, soon to be transcribed, became quite clear, I withdrew my hand and stood upright. Was I not uncovering the secrets of hearts that were still ?

But Captain Cotter's shriveled face was gazing at me with pleading eyes. For some reason he greatly wished me to note all that was on those stones. How could I spurn the mute prayer of my friend's eyes !

Yielding to the old man's wish, I stooped again and read the inscription with unflinching care.

On the middle stone were these words :

OF THE PINES



Here lies the body of
CAPT^N RICHARD ENDICOTT
who perished at sea
In October 1840
AET. 42 yrs.

The stone to the right read :

Here lies the body
of
RUTH SAVORY ENDICOTT
wife to Captⁿ Richard Endicott
who died Nov. 20, 1860
AET. 59 yrs. 5 mos.

These two were the more weather-worn. The stone to the left bore these words :

Here lies the body of
ABIGAIL ROCKWELL
who should have been the wife
of
CAPT^N RICHARD ENDICOTT
who died Oct. 30, 1880
Aged 80 yrs. 10 mos.

There was a bit of Scripture cut at the base of this stone. But this was

S A I N T A B I G A I L

read hurriedly, though it was unusual enough to make a man eager ; for the words in the middle of the inscription set me querying whether I had read them aright. So the wonderment deepened as I read once more these strange words :

“Who should have been the wife.”

To this day a question still haunts my memory of that moment. What sign let the old man know that those particulars words had drawn me by their magic ? Perhaps I startled unawares ; or it may be I bent and peered at them. But something led him to step forward softly and look up into my face with the eyes of a man whose secret is laid open.

“Have you read the words ?” he asked.

That same queer light flickered in his eyes. A keen desire began to flame within me to know about this

OF THE PINES

grizzled seaman's part in such a matter. Had there been a tragedy in these lives ? And what should give him this eye-gleam as he stood by those stones ? So it was that I did not speak.

“ What do you make out, sir ? ” he went on after silence.

I heard a turtle-dove, perhaps in the elm tree over our heads, plaintively cooing to its mate. In the still sunshine my voice sounded like a jarring intrusion as I said, “ Captain, let us move away from these graves to talk.”

The old man's tethered step led the way a few paces ; then he turned as if expecting my answer.

“ I think I knew her, captain.”

There seemed to be no need for him to ask which woman of the two. Without a word he led me on.

“ In my youth I knew a lady whom her friends called Miss Abigail. She was of a great age and loved by many.

S A I N T A B I G A I L

She lived not far from here — northward from New Bedford a few miles. I shall never forget calling on her once."

"I 've ofttimes won'ered ef you 'd rec'lect that day," the captain broke in. "That was the fust sight I ever had o' ye."

The first sight he ever had of me ! What could he have had to do with that visit ?

Going on as quietly as a man may in such a case, I said : "Graybearded men told me how in her youth she was a famous beauty. They said something, too, of a certain mystery hanging about her unwedded life. But none knew anything of that save that there was a mystery. So I know nothing, captain, of what those words back there on that stone mean."

The captain's upturned face and restless movements showed that enough had been said.

O F T H E P I N E S

“I want to tell ye,” he began, with a downward sweep of his open hand. As if bracing himself for an unhasting fulfilment of a purpose long pent up, he swung his arms behind him, grasped one tattooed wrist with the other hand, and fell to talking.

At first the scant stream of his words lost its way at many an unfamiliar turn, and the fore part of the story must needs be told with fuller flow, drawing from many sources. But at length his speech gathered volume until like a river it bore all things with it; he shall speak for himself, then, till the river is lost in the salt sea tide.

We strolled, and stood in our tracks, and strolled on, over and over as he talked. And the pasture slopes of Seaconnet were sweet with the sea’s breath and the warm sunshine and the scent of bayberry.

III

“A Boy’s Will Is The Wind’s Will”

III

“A Boy’s Will Is The Wind’s Will”

WHEN in 1818 the greatest of New Bedford’s old whaling days opened, Jason Cotter was a little “cut-tail.” So he was called by the skipper and crew of the mackerel schooner, *Rachel*, or later aboard the *White Wing* sailing to the Banks for cod. This is the same as saying that he was one of the many lads of those parts who, at about ten years of age, were sent to the hard school of the sea. These little, tender toilers did not share the “lays” of fish by which their elders were paid. Their only reward besides learning the ways of men who go down to the sea in ships and the quick sharpening of their wits, was the pay for the fish they themselves caught. Each fish the boy drew in was marked by snipping

S A I N T A B I G A I L

the tail before it was thrown into the general store. So Jason Cutter was a little "cut-tail" when the greatest period of the old whaling days began.

As the wane of that time set in, he was a man who had seen fifty years on salt water, and he was waning, too. But his weathered eyes had beheld such sights in the harbor of New Bedford as no other port of the world could boast, when as many as four hundred whaling craft were going and coming there. And he had seen the wonders of the deep off many a coast.

When he had sailed some seven or eight seasons, and the flowing sea had set in motion the surge of manhood within him as he neared his eighteenth year, he burned with desire to ship on board a whaler. For the soldier's boy will play with a sword to the sound of a beaten drum, and the sailor lad is always longing for the ventures of outermost seas.

OF THE PINES

“But, captain,” I asked, “did n’t a boy have to face cruelty in plenty aboard the old whalers?”

I saw his wizen face wince at memories throbbing still after more than sixty years; and so low did he answer “Yes,” that the word almost faded away before it reached my ear.

“But ’twas takin’ pot luck on sea ’r shore fur a sailor in them days,” he added. “Most folks thought o’ him as a sort o’ water-beast—needed in their bus’ness, but scurse a man at best.”

Many a seafaring man hated ship-owners and their kind in bitter return. Sailor lodging-houses were often wretched enough to make a man glad to go back to the toil of the deck and the hard lot of the forecastle.

“When I was in port ’fore my folks moved down to New Bedford,” said the old man, “I’d cruise round the streets with nothin’ to do an’ nowheres to go.”

S A I N T A B I G A I L

One day the lad stood looking into a shop window. Three gentlemen of the ship-owning class were talking on the steps of the old Bedford Bank. There were many Quakers among the town's chief people in those days, and two of these men wore drab clothes with silver buckles at the knee and on their shoes. Broad-brimmed beavers made their "thee" and "thy" and "Friend" seem fitting in their speech.

The third man, who was one of the "world's people," not being a Friend, spoke the words which caught the ear of the young seaman.

"No, neighbors," said he, "it will never do. Our townsfolk have looked on seamen as a despised class long enough. They are men; we must so deal with them on sea and ashore."

"But they be men beyond hope, thee knows that," was the reply; "their ungodly ways ashore wreck them as wind and waves do at sea.

OF THE PINES

They be fellows of the baser sort—
thee knows not that they have aught
of that inner light which lighteth every
man.”

“Yea, Friend Cartright,” answered
the other man in Quaker garb, “thee
knows they hate us to thy sorry; but
we must return good for evil, and if
we can, we must find a way to speak
to their conditions. My mind is with
thine, neighbor Addison; they be
men, and Friends will join their neigh-
bors of the steeple-houses in trying to
speak to the needs of these evil-doers.”

Then they passed into the Bank;
and Jason swallowed hard to keep
from yelling at them in his rage.

The next time he was in port he
strayed into a gathering in a small
room near the harbor. There, among
others, were the two Friends and the
man they called “Neighbor Addison.”

“An’ they was talkin’ kindlike with
us sailor lads,” said Captain Cotter,

S A I N T A B I G A I L

“ an’ givin’ us little bags with things a fellow needs at sea in ‘em, an’ tracts an’ little Bibles.”

“ Neighbor Addison” noticed the boy Jason Cotter. There were business men in Boston who knew the worth of Addison Rockwell’s friendship. In his quiet way he handed Jason a comfort-bag filled with daintily prepared articles and having “ Matthew 11: 28 ” worked upon it in red silk. “ My daughter made it, my lad,” said he, “ and we hope you will think of us as your friends.”

Captain Cotter’s eyes glistened as he told of this and added, “ Long afterwards them words flamed up in my mem’ry, an’ oh, sir, they burned like coals o’ fire on my head ! ”

Then he fell to telling, halting and hurrying his words by turns, how some found ways of getting places in the shelter of a friend’s favor. “ Ship’s cousin ” was the bitter name by which

OF THE PINES

a suffering crew dubbed a man so spared by captain or mate.

Now there was a whaleman, Richard Endicott by name, who was known in all the fleet of that port. When Jason was a small boy he heard of him whenever the *White Wing* brought the lad home from the Banks. Later, this man's exploits with sperm-whales in the middle and southern Atlantic were the talk of the harbor. For young Endicott had made his mark as a harpooner of iron nerve and skill without limit; and now as mate he was famed for running his boat alongside the whale with a rush and driving his lance home with a quick, terrible calmness, which seemed to those near him in such ventures nothing short of magic. This man was now coming to his own, having the seasoned strength and the set purpose belonging to his twenty-eighth year.

“Jest wait till Dick Endicott’s a cap’n!” were the words Jason heard

S A I N T A B I G A I L

one day as he passed a bunch of sea-dogs on the pier.

It so happened that Jason Cotter had a kinswoman, Ruth Savory ; of sea-faring stock, comely and wholesome with the ripe womanliness of five and twenty. More than once the lad had seen Richard at the Savory cottage when his ship was in port ; he had noticed, too, that the man so fiercely brave beside a whale in the roar of the smitten sea, was very gentle with Ruth and lingered timidly at her father's gate in the quiet night.

Small wonder, then, that the boy, with the sharpened wits of a sailor taught to cling to a spar or quick to seize a rope's end, said within himself, “ When Mr. Endicott 's a cap'n 't is likely there 'd be fair wind for his own wife's cousin.”

So the lad was very kind to his cousin Ruth. And the whale-ships went and came.

IV

A Sea-Song Heard in the Dark

IV

A Sea-Song Heard in the Dark

NORTHWARD a few miles along a pleasant highway leading out of the rich old whaling town, on a road running off to the Acushnet shore, was a quiet home-stead. Tall pines stood guard before it. A massive door-stone, hewn broad and true years before, lay ready for the guest at the ample threshold. On either side small-paned windows gave subtle distinction to the dwelling's square expanse. The deep casements, open to the sun, were set with flowers, witness-bearers to the womanly touch on the life within.

A traveler through that leafy road, though he were a stranger, would know at a glance that the head of that household was not of the men who manned the ships in the harbor. His

SAINT ABIGAIL

was the better lot of those who dwell at home amid their own cherished acres.

If the traveler chanced to be acquainted with that region he would not fail as he passed along to glance a second time through those pine trees and even to let his eyes linger. For Abigail Rockwell was famed for her beauty and the charm of her speech even then, though she was still in her early twenties; and this was Abigail Rockwell's home.

It was not hard to trace in the old man's face and voice what fluttering of heart there was when the lad Jason first found that Richard Endicott was a welcome guest in that home, though as yet he knew not who dwelt there.

“When Mr. Endicott’s ship was in port,” he ran on gravely, “an’ I had the luck to be home from the Banks, I’d go somew’at oft evenin’s roundb y Ruth Savory’s. Fur I liked the sight

OF THE PINES

o' the hollyhawks an' marigolds inside
their white picket fence, an' the scent
o' her roses, or the shinin' o' the lamp
she kep' in the little parlor window,
spesh'ly when the fog blowed in an' the
yard was wet and the moon missin'.

“But I liked things best when I
found that lamp hid by the white
muslin curt'in. Fur more 'n once I
hed heerd Richard's voice quiet-like
now an' then inside when that curt'in
was so.”

Then there came a shift in his man-
ner of speech, like a quick flaw of wind
on a still sea swelling the sails and
spreading a flurry on the water.

“But 'fore long I noted how that
curt'in wa'n't drawed to so oft, an'
Ruth's lamp stood burnin' at the win-
dow in plain sight all evenin'. ‘T is a
mite thick to wind'ard,’ says I. So I
goes on the lookout for'ard !”

The old man's eyes were drawn
half shut now, and set as if peering

S A I N T A B I G A I L

over white caps and facing a wind fog-laden. Soon it was clear that he saw breakers — breakers far back in his boyhood.

“By ‘n’ by one evenin’, jest ‘fore dark, I made out Richard Endicott movin’ under light canvas ‘long the north road an’ out’ard bound. A gibbous moon was comin’ out o’ the sea lookin’ ‘s ef it meant to shine its best that night. ‘Pears like ‘t is much the same with Mr. Endicott an’ the moon on them two points to-night,’ says I to myself. So I puts off in his wake. It was a long tack an’ it fetched up sharp on the rocks. Fur by ‘n’ by I saw Richard turn in at a big fine house on the road to the shore.

“An’ then — ye’ll not furgit, sir, that I was but a lad then, will ye ?”

My assurance was given in silence.

“I watched him, sir, through a open winder — watched him take a seat — saw a fine lady come in — wondrous

OF THE PINES

light o' foot, sir, with a glad step like
her voice ; an' I heerd her call him
Richard!"

"I swore like a sailorman out there
under a tree. When the squall hed
'bout blowed over, I heerd Richard
sayin': 'Abigail, would you sing that
song again for me ?' She seemed to
know the song he meant without ask-
in'. I watched her go to the piano,—
I can see her now and how beautiful
she was ; but God knows how I hated
her — an' I listened to her sing.

"I remember that her voice was soft-
like, but it sounded clear as a bell out
under the trees. I remember, too,
how these was the fust words :

'The years creep slowly by, Lorena.'

"Then fur a spell I was all shook
up an' I could n't hear nothin' but the
tune. By 'n' by I got quiet-like inside
an' heerd what she was singin'. It
was somethin' 'bout, 'It matters little

S A I N T A B I G A I L

now, Lorena,' and 'Life's tide is ebbin' out so fast.' That last caught my ear. An' somehow her voice seemed wondrous kind, an' I listened so close that I never furgot what she was singin' at the last. It run like this :

'There is a Future ! O thank God,
Of life this is so small a part !
'T is dust to dust beneath the sod ;
But there, up there, 't is heart to heart.'

"No, I 've never furgot that, sir, I 've never furgot. An' when she stopped singin', I did n't hate her any more ; an' I did n't feel like lis'nin' to her and Richard any longer. So I stole off in the dark. Out in the road I turned an' looked back an' saw the light shinin' out o' the open winder. An' as I started on down the road, all I said was, 'Poor Ruth ! ' "

OF THE PINES

It mat - ters lit - tle now Lo - re - na, The
past is in th' e - ter - nal past, Our
heads will soon lie low, Lo - re - na, Life's
tide is ebb - ing out so fast. There
is a fu - ture! O thank God, of
life this is so small a part! 'Tis
dust to dust be - neath the 'sod; . . . But
there, up there, 'tis heart to heart. 'Tis
dust to dust be - neath the sod; . . . But
there, up there, 'tis heart to heart.

V

The Tide Coming In

V

The Tide Coming In

MANY a year had come and gone like the flowing and ebbing tides before Jason heard the words of that song again. But a day came at last, nay, a night, when he heard them ; and before that night was gone the boom of the sea and the groans of the writhing ship seemed fitting sounds to blend with the throb-bings of his heart.

Richard Endicott was not bred to the sea. For two generations his family had dwelt in their square-chimneyed farmhouse in Wilbraham. The men and women of that ample dwelling knew their Bibles and cherished the things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard ; but they also rejoiced betimes in the sight of their eyes and the hearing of their ears. Thrift was a part of

S A I N T A B I G A I L

their health, beauty a portion of their wealth. Theirs was the mode of living where righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Out of such a home, much against his parents' wishes, it must be said, and led on by a lad's thirst for adventure, Richard had come in his eighteenth year to the old whaling town, where for so many years the air of the world and of the high seas between ports left its salt on a man's lips.

Through the years since then he had thrown himself, both on land and sea, into the life of the sea-going men whose ventures he had dared to share. Their people had been his people, and more than once he had come near dying where they died. Yet through all, such is the spell of birth and child-life, the kind of manhood bred in that inland home had shown fast color. Impure womanhood had never lured him ; for there was a manly pity in his

OF THE PINES

heart. Yet he was no anchorite. Many a merry hour in port had he among the fisherfolk, and many a seaman's comely daughter had gladdened his heart and quickened its beating after the way of maidens since Rebekah went down to the fountain with her pitcher and Rachel to the well with her sheep. But at last Ruth Savory came to be in his dreams.

Still, through all the pulsing pleasantness of the time following, there was a dim desire within him unreached as yet. Clearly aware of it he was not; but it was there. Like the shadowy tints deep within a rough sea-shell, faint but of unfading hues, his mother had imaged in his breast a womanly presence touched by the charm of finer instincts. That impress waited still, unmatched, unsatisfied by the wholesome daughters of the fisher cottages. For there is no test of a man's inmost quality more penetrating

S A I N T A B I G A I L

than this, the kind of womanhood that puts his heart at rest.

But that mother's dower of blessing on her son had not yet yielded its full entail. A day came when a gentleman from Wilbraham met Abigail Rockwell's father in Boston, and, when business was done, he spoke of the loss his town had lately suffered in the death of an exceptional woman.

"A lady of rare grace of person and of character," said he. "She herself was an Adams, and by marriage an Endicott. The only son, Richard, took to the sea when very young. Fortunately he was in port and was able to be with his mother at the last. I saw him at the funeral, a stalwart fellow with a finely molded, manly face. By the way, Mr. Rockwell, I understand he sails out of your own city."

So it was that the mate of the *Sea Gull* began to be a guest now and then

OF THE PINES

in the Rockwell home; for Addison Rockwell, besides having compassion for the poor, had the ways of a quiet gentleman of the old school and found pleasure in showing hospitality to a man of parts.

From the first there was something about Abigail which played upon the young seaman's mind each time he saw her in that retired home, with the charm of memories awakened after years of forgetting. So passed the months. And Richard's breast had become as a place where two seas meet.

In the weeks following his last trip in, he had grown fond of visiting the home of Abigail's father. Her presence, her sunny speech, perhaps above all her songs, had held a pleasant spell over him through all the rough ways in the fourteen months of his last cruise. When at last they were homeward bound, he found his thoughts hurrying

SAINT ABIGAIL

on before the lumbering ship, on past the harbor and the office of the owners, on out the north road to her home. Now for three months of mellow summer he had been in port, the vessel needing renewal. What more is to be told ? In any case, Jason heard Abigail call the mate “Richard,” and she knew the song he wanted to hear ; and that song was “Lorena.” We of this later time have forgotten the tremulous charm of that lover’s plaint, but many a heart beat to its rhythm in the old days.

When the song ended and Jason was going off in the dark, Abigail sat running her fingers fondly over the keys. At last Richard said, “How strange it is that I should like that line so well !”

The piano sounded on a few more chords ; then, without stopping the harmonies, Abigail answered, “What line, Richard ?”

OF THE PINES

“The one about ‘Life’s tide ebbing out so fast,’ ” said he.

She finished the deepening chord and held its vibrant tones as she said, “That is because you have listened to the music of the sea so long, is it not, Richard ? ”

Then she fell into that quiet winsomeness of face and voice which was a way with her, and told how she had watched the tide come in that morning, how it moved up the harbor and rippled along the Acushnet shore and slowly covered all the bare sand with fresh waves until it washed against the meadow-grass. “And it comes in so twice each day that goes by,” she said with a kindling smile.

Richard was stirred with desire to say that he could see life as her parable had shown it if she were on the shore of the seas he sailed.

While this thought burned in his heart, her fingers touched the keys

S A I N T A B I G A I L

again and the strain from "Lorena" which lingers in the ear sounded like a refrain. It was as if she had spoken the words,—

"Life's tide is ebbing out so fast."

Richard's look made her mindful of what she had done unawares.

"I was not thinking, Richard," she said with quick sympathy in her eyes.

"But I *was* thinking," he answered. "I have now won a place among seafaring men, and no doubt I can better it in due time. But with no life besides that at sea—I, a man of thirty—after all—well, no wonder that line holds like an anchor to windward."

"A seaman to the very heart!" she said with gentle playfulness. And that was all.

After a moment Richard braved the silence. "You must know something of what you have come to be to me; and, Abigail, I know that if ever the tide comes in and life is at the flood

OF THE PINES

for me, you will be standing on the shore."

The mate of the *Sea Gull* knew, or thought he knew, what an off-shore wind he was heading against ; for families like Abigail's were quite apart from the fisherfolk. Small wonder, then, that he now shifted helm, with prudent hope of making the harbor at last. If he had only held his course, and — but who can tell what might have been if any of us had only known the heart of some one back in the vanished years !

Now it had come to pass that little ways of companionship had opened between them ; among these was one in which Richard found singular charm. Abigail's love for all things beautiful as well as her piety made her delight in marking choice words in her Bible, and she was fond of mentioning to her friends some treasured find.

From a child Richard also had

S A I N T A B I G A I L

known the Scriptures, though such matters had dropped out of his thought since he went to sea. So it was that Abigail's way had kindled Richard's memories of the days with his mother. And there is no charm like that to a man with a heart unsullied.

So it was, too, that they had fallen into the habit of marking passages together, Richard noting the marks shown him in Abigail's Bible ; and, hardly knowing how it began, they were reading them at the same hour when apart. Sometimes when Richard was about to say, "Good-night," or when one sent a message to the other, as they did now and then, finding love's witchery making occasion, they did it by giving a Bible reference. For so a casket seems befitting because the stone is precious.

"Have you not some good bit of Bible for me to-night ?" said Richard as he was about to take his leave.

OF THE PINES

“Oh, there is one I have been enjoying these three days,” she answered. “I must show it to you, Richard, before you can go.”

Soon she was reading these words: “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

“These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.”

As she read on in the lamp’s glow, Richard watched her face with its mingled beauty of form and color and light from within, and drank in the words, wondering why she had been finding joy in them “these three days.”

Her voice sounded on: “For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind which lifteth up the waves thereof.

“They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.

“They reel to and fro, and stagger

S A I N T A B I G A I L

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like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.

“Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

“He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet ; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.”

The woman looked up with a hush in her eyes.

“Where is that, Abigail ?”

“In the One Hundred and Seventh Psalm.”

“What verses are those about ‘the waves being still’ and ‘bringing them to their desired haven’ ?”

She turned the book with her finger on the words. In the silence the man's eye followed the slender finger. Then he saw those words of infinite calm in the glow of a hallowing light !

So they took for their remembrance that night, Psalm 107 : 29, 30.

## OF THE PINES

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Ere long Richard said "Good night,"  
lingering as he went. And Abigail  
stood in the door-light as he passed  
under the pine trees into the dark.



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VI

*Full Tide*

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## VI

### *Full Tide*

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MORNING broke on the tree-tops around the Rockwell home. The September sunbeams were soon playing about their old and steadfast friend, the great square chimney, rising above the roof, which was still in shadow and wet with dew. A cheerful streamer of smoke was already going up into the autumn air.

And it was morning in the heart of Abigail. As soon as she saw the sunlight, she found herself wishing for a sight of the bay. So when morning duties were done, for the peace of her home was not that of idleness, she strolled along the leaf-filled road to the shore. Lingering nasturtiums and geraniums, with salvia and marigolds rejoicing in their time, lifted their warm colors beside the walk to the

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

gate,— the walk along which Richard had passed the evening before ; the modest little pimpernel, bright with orange glow, peeped out of the sand along the roadway ; goldenrod showed its plumes in the corners of the rail fences ; the trees were aflame with late September's joy ; and the bay — oh, its clear, blue waters were all agleam !

“Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice,” she repeated in a voice that sounded softly over the wash of the little waves. For the glow of ripened love was in her heart, with the freshness of morning upon it. And when Richard came again, yes, she would let him know that he need not hold back from speaking any longer.

So the girl was glad with the old, old joy of womanhood, as she stood with the morning sun glinting on the waters and lighting up the mellow grandeur of the trees behind her.

## OF THE PINES

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Not far down the shore it was a busy day in the harbor of New Bedford for the mate of the *Sea Gull*. All day long and far into the night he was on duty aboard the whaler, lacking nothing of the ship's officer—a man of iron will, with a voice to be heard the first time.

Boats were plying between the piers and the *Sea Gull* swinging at her anchor. Carpenters, shipwrights, calkers were clearing her decks of their tools, climbing over her sides to the unsteady boats. Rough men, some chattering in strange tongues, were clambering aboard. Boxes, barrels, bales, and other stores were going into her hold at a merry rate. Answering voices sounded along the deck and from men aloft as they set up her rigging. The mate kept his eye on all till the lanterns had been burning far past midnight. For the owners, impatient at long delay, had learned that the craft

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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was about ready for the sea, and had ordered that she weigh anchor the first day possible. The captain had sworn he would be off by night of the next day. There was hot blood in men's veins.

When Richard turned in at last, tired though he was, he fell to thinking of Abigail. He longed to send her a message. Before he slept he found the little Bible now brought to his ship's quarters for the first time. He read the passage which she had made so dear the night before. Then he turned here and there to others which she had chosen for their reading during the months just past. His eye followed the story of how Rebecca was found for Isaac. He lingered on the words :

“ And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth.

“ And they called Rebecca, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man ? And she said, I will go.”

The effect was as if a voice out of

## OF THE PINES

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the night sky had spoken to him. He sat pondering the message ; for it opened to him the way in which he fain would go.

Then by the light of his lantern he wrote a letter, hoping that a way would be found to send it to Abigail in the morning. This was what he wrote :

MY DEAR FRIEND,— My ship is ordered to sea at once. We shall make sail before another night, if it is in the power of men to get ready for it. How little I thought that I should not see you again for many months ! But I carry with me the blessing of knowing you—surely you will not be surprised if I add, the blessing of loving you. I may never see you again, Abigail. Great waves will roll between us. You will understand, and at least will not think unkindly of me if in writing hurriedly I say only that I have been reading once more the story about finding a wife for Isaac and can no longer keep from telling you that all is summed up for me in the words of Genesis 24: 57, 58.

Yours with gratitude,

RICHARD ENDICOTT.

## SAINT ABIGAIL



Having so written, he folded the letter and laid it in his Bible, feeling that somehow the two belonged together; then for the first time in many a year he felt drawn to place the little book under his pillow. And so the weary man was soon asleep. But not even in his fairest dream did he fancy that another reference to the sacred page had been written that day by a happy woman who had stood in the sunlight of the morning up the shore.

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**VII**

*Ebb Tide*

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## VII

### *Ebb Tide*

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**I**N the early morning the mate was on deck again, and the rush of hurried men was all about him. For it was to be the *Sea Gull's* last day in the home port for nobody knew how long.

Richard's letter to Abigail was tucked inside his blouse.

Toward eleven o'clock he spied the lad Jason in one of the boats laden with stores and coming alongside. He had come to know the boy at sight, having seen him here and there about whale-ships. He had seemed a likely boy. Richard had noticed his pleasant way of touching his cap to the mate of the *Sea Gull*. He knew little more of him, least of all did he have any knowledge as to who were his kinsfolk.

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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Jason's heart leaped to his mouth when he heard the mate call him aft. Could it be that his time to ship in a whaler had come, and with Mr. Endicott? Ruth must have said a good word for him after all, and sooner than he hoped. "I'll say Yes, an' go sign fur the *Sea Gull*, an' 'tis done," the boy was saying to himself as he went along the deck to the spot where the mate was standing.

"There's an errand I want done," the mate began. "I can't leave the ship now, maybe can't go ashore before we sail, and I want word back. Here's a dollar if you'll do it for me and be spry. What do you say?"

Jason caught his breath. His disappointment half choked him.

"I guess I can do it, sir," he stammered.

"Well, then, I want you to take this letter ashore and go at once out the north road about two miles, then

## OF THE PINES

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turn into the road leading toward the river. Not far down that road, on the north side of it, is a big square house with pine trees in front. That's Addison Rockwell's house, where I want you to take this letter. Do you know the Rockwell place?"

"Yes, sir," Jason answered; then quickly he became confused and added, "Leastwise, I mean, sir, I've been through there onc't,—an' I can find it."

The mate saw no meaning in the lad's confusion.

The youth's disappointment was fast turning to bitter thoughts.

Envelopes had not come into general use in those days, and of wafers or sealing wax then used to fasten the folded sheet there was none aboard the *Sea Gull*. So the letter was wrapped about with several strands of thread tied in a hard knot, when Richard handed it to Jason.

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

The lad's wrath had begun to sputter in noiseless oaths after the manner of sailors, as he climbed down the ship's side. While he pulled for shore he was thinking of the night when he followed Richard and wondering if Rockwell was not Abigail's last name. When he had passed behind the pier out of view from the *Sea Gull* he took the letter from his pocket. The oars swung to the boat's side and trailed in the water as he read the address. Yes, there it was, all written out, just as he had guessed. "Miss—Abigail—Rockwell," so he read it off with drawling heartlessness. For his memory of what he had seen through the window that night was keen as an east wind, but the spell of the song was gone.

"I might as well know what cargo I'm carryin'," he said as he left the streets about the pier behind, "an' I kin tie a knot that'll hold as well as his'n."

## OF THE PINES

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Lifting the thread close to the knot, he cut it, cut away the knotted end, and opened the sheet.

When he had finished reading the letter he said, "An' I might as well know what them Bible verses tell about."

He was not long in getting to his mother's cottage, finding her worn little Bible, and shutting himself in his bedroom close against the slant of the roof.

Soon he had found the place cited in the letter, and was reading the words chosen by the hurried seaman to voice the thoughts of his heart.

"Wants her to marry him, eh!" he muttered. "Well, 't is a purty mess; a purty mess, I call it! And Ruth awond'rin' all the time what's happened. And besides, how'm I to ever ship with him ef this thing goes on?"

It was not long until he began to say, "Before night he'll be where no-

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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budy can find him fur goodness knows how long. 'Pears like there 'd ort to be some way o' cuttin' the rope an' lettin' 'em go adrift. That 's w'at any sailor 'd do at sea when 't is the only way o' savin' his ship."

The young man sat moodily with the letter and the little Bible in his hands, while his embittered spirit led him into a wilderness of devices wherein he was tempted of the devil.

At length this thought took shape in his mind. "Wonder how it might tangle things to change them Bible numbers a mite!" With a chuckle he fell to running his finger up and down the chapter referred to in Richard's letter. At last he stopped it on a verse which made him hold his breath.

From childhood the youth had known and shared the strife rankling in the minds of many who sailed the fishing craft, against the families who

## OF THE PINES

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dwell in seeming ease. It was as natural for him to think of that now as to breathe the salt air. The verses he had hit upon seemed to match that feeling.

“I’ll jest change that 5 to 3,” he said, “an’ let it stand 37, 38 instid of 57, 58.” The form of the figures lent aid to the change, and it was soon made.

“There, now, his letter will end this way.” Slowly he traced the lines as he read. “I may never see you again, Abigail. Great waves will roll between us. You will understand and at least will not think unkindly of me if in writing hurriedly I say only that I have been reading once more the story about finding a wife for Isaac and can no longer keep from telling you that all is summed up for me in the words of Genesis 24: 37, 38.”

Having made his way through these words, his lips were still save for a

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

weak smile, as his eye read the passage fixed by his finger :

“ My master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell : but thou shalt go unto my father’s house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.”

“ There,” he muttered, “ she won’t know w’at that means, maybe, but she ’ll know there ’s somethin’ up. I guess that ’ll make some big waves roll between ’em sure ’nough.”

Then he folded the letter, wrapped and tied the thread, and at once started out the north road.

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## VIII

### *Borne out with the Tide*

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## VIII

### *Borne out with the Tide*

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WHEN Captain Cotter reached this point in the story the old man had been toiling in his speech, like a vessel beating her way against a hard blow with a long sweep. Once he had turned aside and stood looking down, there being nothing at the spot to gaze at that I could see but a stubble of bayberry, which was common enough in Seaconnet. As I watched him he lifted his eyes as if unmindful of me and took a far look seaward. A single vessel outward bound and well to sea was holding a long tack in the offing.

Soon he turned and fell to talking again as we strolled on. But he seemed to hurry now as if eager to get to something he was wishing to tell. From his jumbled words and still more fitful

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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glances and twitchings of face I made out what took place in the course of his journey out the north road.

When Abigail had taken Richard's letter and had read it with quick eyes, she at once took a card from the folds of her dress — a card already written upon — and bade him carry it to Mr. Endicott as soon as he could. “Do you think you can reach the ship before she sails ?” were the last words Jason heard as he started off running. For he was restless with desire to get away.

Toward four o'clock the mate of the *Sea Gull* said to the captain : “Perhaps I'd better be going ashore, sir, as I have a thing or two to close up before we sail.”

He had kept a sharp lookout for Jason for two or three hours past.

“ As soon as you like, Mr. Endicott,” was the answer of the *Sea Gull's* captain, “ fur I 'm set on seein' that anchor

## OF THE PINES

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come aweigh soon after five o'clock,  
sure."

Richard called at the office of the owners, made a few simple purchases in the shops near the piers, exchanged farewell greetings with many who wished him luck, all the while watching for a sight of Jason. At last he felt bound to put off for his ship, wondering why the lad was not back in time to see the whaler leave, whether he had an answer for him or not. As he came alongside there were many boats with oar or sail in the water around the *Sea Gull*, some on business but more to see the whaler off. For she was a craft of note, a veteran with a record ; and above all "Dick" Endicott was aboard of her again. "That's him," said one lad after another, watching the stalwart mate climbing the vessel's side.

But among all the faces looking up from the boats bobbing about, Richard saw nothing of Jason.

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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Meanwhile Jason Cotter was bending over his mother's Bible once more in his low-roofed room.

When he had gone down the road far enough to be out of sight from the Rockwell home, he had looked at the card which Abigail had bidden him carry with haste to Mr. Endicott. He had read with a bitter smile what was written thereon in a light, flowing hand:

“Ruth 1: 16, 17.

A. R.”

“Guess I'll have to read the Bible some more 'fore I give him this.” Then he set off at a lad's pace, nursing his wonderment and plotting mischief in a boy's weak way as he went.

By three o'clock he was in his room again, had found the place, and was floundering with heartless mockery through the clear depths of Ruth's plaintive song of love. Embittered as he was, his young heart was heedless

## OF THE PINES

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of the charm of the words as he read :

“ Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God : where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”

By four o'clock he had run his finger up and down the verses of the whole book of Ruth and had found that there was no way of changing that card as he had the letter. For there is nothing in Ruth but words of faithful love. He sat glowering and baffled.

At length his eye strayed to the page next to the opening of Ruth, the close of the book of Judges. Soon his finger stopped at the eighteenth verse : —

## SAINT ABIGAIL

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“Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters.”

“Ef I could only git that in fur his answer!” he said. “He’d think the old man had turned ag’in’ him; fur ‘A. R.’ stands fur Addison Rockwell’s well ’s Abigail Rockwell.”

But there was no way of changing “Ruth” to “Judges.”

He looked once more at the number of the chapter and the verse.

“Ef I could only git that in!” he said again. At last, being at his wit’s end, he put off sullenly for the pier. It was past five o’clock.

When he came in sight of the harbor he saw at a glance that the *Sea Gull* had hove short her anchor, saw, too, that many were out to see her off. Quickly he got a boat and made for the ship. They were loosing her topsails as he went toward her with the speed of oars; then they broke out anchor and she swung about with her

## OF THE PINES

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bows to the harbor mouth. As he came alongside by a short course she was moving freely in glad response to the welcome of the wind, and he soon fell astern.

Richard was on deck standing aft. Busy as he was, he saw the lad, came to the taffrail and called down to him : “ Did you get there with the letter ? ”

“ Ay, ay, sir,” Jason replied.

“ Any answer ? ”

“ Some words on a card, sir.”

“ Read 'em to me ; be quick, lad ; what are they ? ”

“ ‘ Judges 21 : 18, A. R., ’ sir,” Jason called.

The ship was fast leaving his boat rocking in her wake.

The mate made a note ; with a wave of his hand he called out, “ All right, my lad ! ” Then he turned quickly to the work of his men in the rigging.

By six o'clock the sun was sinking

## SAIN T A BIGAIL

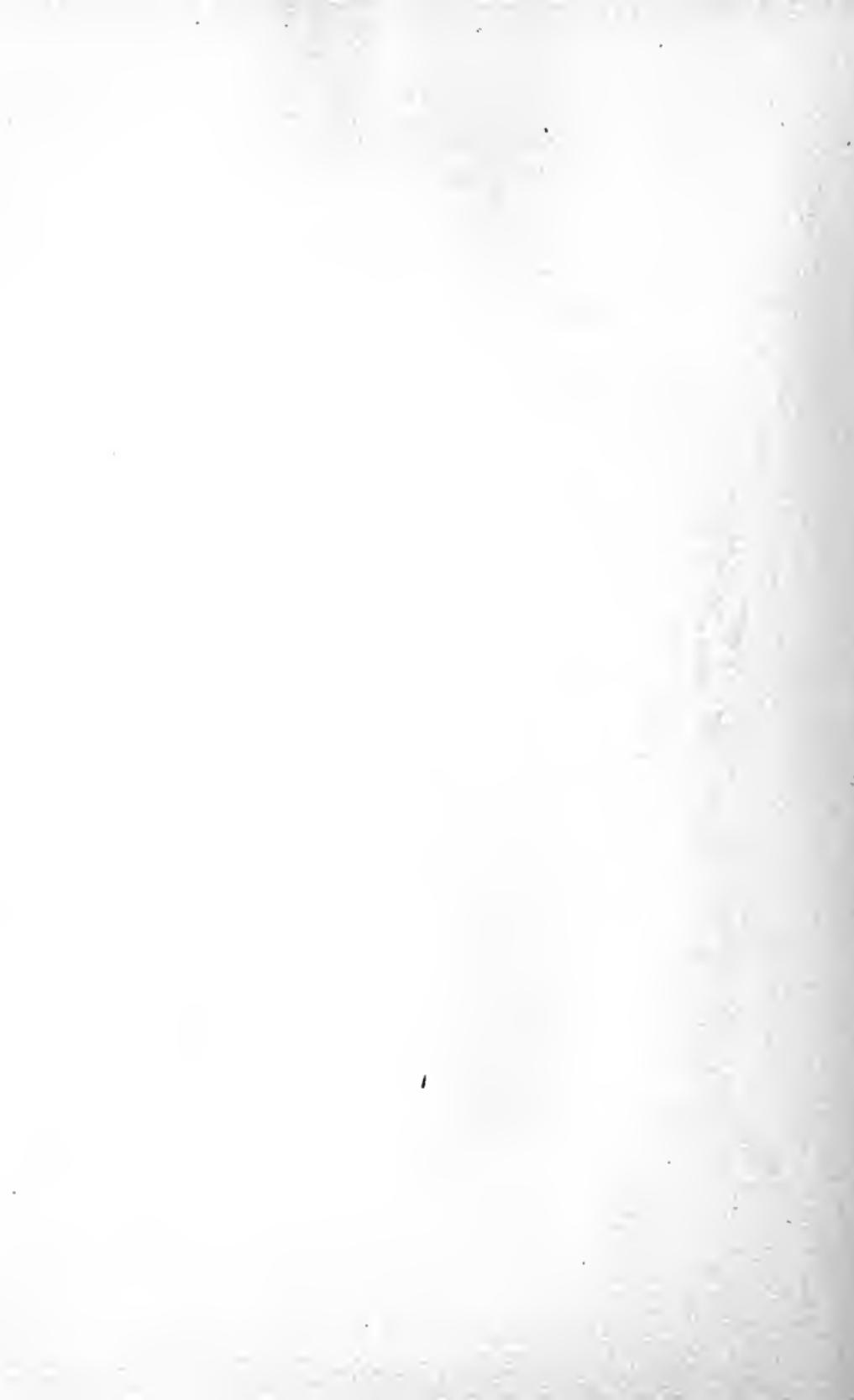
behind the spires and pleasant tree-tops of old New Bedford. It hung a golden globe in a bank of cloud as if loth to leave the scene. It threw a ruddy light on the waters of the bay and the white wing of the inbound pilot-boat and the tall sails of the *Sea Gull* now outside and squaring herself for the open sea. Then it sank in the cloud. And the whale-ship vanished into the night.

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# IX

## *The Battle with Whales*

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## IX

### *The Battle with Whales*

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**A**NOTHER September's tenderness had filled the air and tinted the fields and trees, and two Octobers had deepened the tone of the landscape along those shores before the *Sea Gull* again hove in sight by Cuttyhunk and at last dropped anchor in the harbor of New Bedford.

Abigail was in Boston, the guest of her father's friends. For another September's memories and the ruddy glow of two Octobers had flamed in her breast and cast their mellowing light upon her eyes and brow; and the father had sought new ways of life for her.

Ruth, sharing the uneased way of the poor, was in her cottage, where the hollyhocks were dead and the marigolds were lifting a shriveled bloom

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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here and there from the cold, lank grass inside the fence.

As for Richard, he welcomed a quick discharge of the *Sea Gull's* ample cargo and a speedy return to the sperm-whale grounds.

So passed the months into the years, like waves into the tide, bringing the solace of toil and the healing ministries of time.

The third summer's life was now at the full along those shores, and the *Sea Gull* came home once more. And what of Richard? Abigail had come to be as a fair dream, still in his thought, but so far as he then knew no longer in his life. Call it a tragedy if you will. The tragedy of unfulfilled longings, of unrealized dreams, is in every life in one form or another. But of all tragedies smothered down in the breasts of men and women, the deepest is when we give up doing what is good because we cannot do what we

## O F T H E P I N E S

would. That tragedy did not come in the heart of Richard. Abigail had awakened the finer instincts of his nature and opened his eyes to the life from which he had turned as a youth. But now a hand beyond his control had closed that vision against his love. It was nothing short of a victory now to turn to the life of the fisherfolk which he had chosen, and, with unembittered desire, to make a place for himself amid the comforts of their wholesome love.

So before that third summer faded, the winter blight in Richard's heart had yielded to the fresh flood of life which by God's good grace returns to the heart of a man betimes, as it does to the fields where snows have lain. To a nature like his, serenely just and strong, there would be a sense of moral worth in the thought of returning to his first love, in mating with the gentle daughter of a fellow seafarer.

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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So it was that the fisherfolk kept a merry night under the harvest moon, and Richard and Ruth were wed. And when the *Sea Gull* sailed again, Ruth's eyes were glad through her tears with love's comeliness, as she watched the sails dwindle to a speck that vanished in sea and sky. For "Dick" Endicott was hers, though unseen, and he was now the *Sea Gull's* captain.

But among them all no heart beat faster than young Jason Cotter's. For he was aboard Captain Endicott's ship, bound for the whaling-grounds.

The years sped by. Twice the *Sea Gull's* cruise was two years long. Her captain pushed on to outlying seas, seeking and finding greater store of the precious spermaceti.

Southward they went, and cruised the waters about the Cape Verde Islands. Many black Portuguese came in those days from these islands to serve in New Bedford's whaling-ships.

## OF THE PINES

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Within sight of their smoking peak, nine thousand feet in height, the spoutings of the sperm-whale roaming the sea in schools were often seen like distant signals answering back to the volcano's beckonings against the sky.

Southward they pressed on and on, until the *Sea Gull* crossed "the line," St. Paul's Rocks looming in the distance like lone sentries on the equator, lifting their ragged shoulders twenty thousand feet above their base in the depths that roll around them. Still southward, sighting to the east the frowning mass of St. Helena, where a few years before Napoleon had been caged ; then southward between measureless sea and sky, until from the starboard bow they made out the head of Tristan de Cunha peering above a cloud a hundred miles by water and seven thousand feet in air. Round about Tristan and his brooding companion, Inaccessible Island, lying apart

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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through some twenty miles of deep water, midway in the vast loneliness that sweeps between Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope, were famous sperm-whale grounds. There the *Sea Gull* lingered, gathering into her hold the richness of the southern seas.

Richard had now been captain ten years. Jason, a bearded man of thirty, was the captain's trusty harpooner. Amid all the rigors of life on shipboard the younger man had the confidence of the skipper, and in a way the two men afforded companionship for each other. For this is the way of the wicked in the world until the fulness of time.

One day when the *Sea Gull* was laden nearly to her limit and all hearts were beginning to watch for the time when the boats would be stripped of their whaling gear and stowed aft bottom up, and the decks cleared of the "try-works," and the rigging tarred

## OF THE PINES

afresh and the vessel headed for her long cruise homeward-bound, the watch in the "crow's nest" raised the old but ever stirring cry, "Bl-o-o-ow! Bl-o-o-ow!"

It is best to let Captain Cotter tell what happened then in his own words:

"'T was a way we hed, sir, when the lookout in the crow's nest sighted whale. Sometimes he'd see the sunshine glintin' on a black floatin' mass miles away, 'r sometimes he'd see columns o' white water an' spray spoutin' up in the ocean. Then he'd give a long, low call, sayin': 'Bl-o-o-ow, Bl-o-o-ow, Bl-o-o-ow!' An' in a jiffy all hands 'd be on deck an' waitin' fur orders that wa'n't long comin'.

"Well, on the day I'm tellin' 'bout now, the cap'n 'peared to mount to the main crow's nest 'fore the lookout stopped callin'. 'T was mighty quiet then on that deck while he stood gazin' off to starb'rd, an' we could hear him

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

talkin' low to the man in the fore crow's nest, an' all eyes was lookin' up at the cap'n.

“ ’Fore long, with his voice still quiet-like, he spoke down to the mate. ‘Sperm-whale, Mr. Martin ; fair-sized cow, rolling as though nursing her calf ; big bull moving in a circle near by. I think I ’ll go with you, Mr. Martin. Lower away boats.’

“ The cap'n shot down to the deck, two boats fell away, crews scramblin' into 'em as still as cats, each man to his post. ’Fore the boats got away, while we was shippin' masts an' settin' sail, I heerd the cap'n sayin' low and careful, ‘ I think I ’ll try to close in on that big fellow myself, Mr. Martin, and get fast if I can. I ’d like it if you ’ll stand by to join me unless that cow requires your attention.

“ ‘ Ay, ay, sir,’ was the mate’s low answer.

“ ‘ There ’s somethin’ up,’ says I to

## OF THE PINES

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myself, 'an' 'pears like I 'm to open the game.' For I was harpooner o' the cap'n's boat, an' so my stand was in the bow. So I creeps for'ard an' lays my iron ready in the crutch.

"I 'd ofttimes pulled the harpooner's oar that same way afore, but somehow I could n't help won'rin' now w'at was in the cap'n's mind. He was standin' astern headin' the boat to suit him, with the same low voice an' a sharp lookout.

"The sea was smooth an' the hot wind jest kep' our sail taut an' no more. I heerd the lappin' o' the water under the bow, it was so still. An' as I was harkin' to that the cap'n said quiet-like, 'He 's extra length, Jason ; mind you don't strike the case.'

"Then I begun to understand. He was such a big feller that the cap'n was afraid I would n't 'low fur the length o' the case — that 's the tough cover above the skull and full o' clear

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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sperm. So I kep' an eye on my iron an' waited.

“The cap'n signaled fur a third boat to be lowered. I took note the mate's boat was keepin' nigh us to wind'ard.

“We'd gone like that 'bout two miles, and fur some time hed seen not a sign o' that whale. All on a sudden, p'raps a mile to le'w'rd, I saw a tremenjous spout o' foam shootin' up right out o' the water.

“‘There she white-waters !’ I cried, chokin' down my voice; ‘bl-o-o-ow, ah, bl-o-o-ow.’

“I'd scurce got the words out 'fore the boat swung her nose round an' we was headin' straight away fur that whale. ‘He's extra length, Jason,’ was runnin' through my head. ‘Stand up, Jason,’ the cap'n whispered. As I turned, layin' hold o' my iron, another spout sprayed up dead ahead an' nigher than the last an' flarin' in the fresh'nin’

## OF THE PINES

wind. That bull whale was comin' our way an' we was drivin' bows on to dispute the path. We knowed it would n't take many minutes to eat up a mile that way.

"I breathed somew'at freer when the cap'n veered our course a mite; but 'fore long I stopped breathin' fur a spell altogether. Fur there, less 'n five hundred yards ahead, the water seemed to swell, then fall away, leavin' a huge black-lookin' mass which begun to end up in the water. I tell ye, sir, that whale was a fearsome sight rarin' up there in the lonely sea an' raisin' his black stump o' a head till we saw the white bulk o' his under side. 'T was clear he hed been makin' his way back to the cow an' calf 'thout any idee that anybody was nigh to hinder him; an' 't was soon almighty clear he felt like swearin' at our imperdence. We looked purty small to him, I s'pose, out there with naught but sea an' sky

## SAINT ABIGAIL

in sight ; leastwise we felt that way. Anyhow, he come down in the water with a roarin' splash an' started on.

"Jest as he was comin' alongside, the cap'n's boat swung round an' shot toward him. 'Give it to him, Jason,' shouted the cap'n ; 'let him have it, man, now ! now !'

"While his voice rung an' roared behind me I flung my harpoon with all the might I hed, an' sunk it full length in the bulge o' his side.

"'Give him another, Jason ; give him another, man, quick !' thun'ered the cap'n, as I seized my second iron an' hurled it with a des'prit plunge just in time to get fast low down.

"'Out with the line,' the cap'n cried. I grabbed the box-line—that's the spare coil o' the harpoon rope in the bows — an' heaved it overboard. Then, with the whale headin' into the wind which bore us off, we fell away ; an' the whale line, which lays coiled in

## OF THE PINES

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tubs a couple o' hun'erd fathoms long, begun runnin' out in the water. The mast was unshipped, oars manned, an' then we went back at that whale. Fur nigh eighty fathoms 'r so to wind-ard there he lay gammin', I mean doin' nothin' more'n gettin' acquainted with hisself and won'rin w'at hed happened.

"We knowed he'd get gallied 'fore long, which is to wake up madder 'n a fiend an' whap an' roll till the sea froths an' roars, then run like a wild hurricane with us fastened to him by them irons stickin' in his side, or maybe he'd rush at our boats to fight it out in the open. So we went in on him quick while he was gammin'.

"The cap'n saw that the third boat seemed to have got fast so as to take care o' the cow, so he signaled to the mate's boat, which was standin' by 'cordin' to orders. The two boats was comin' in on him quick an' still as

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

men could do it ; the cap'n and the mate was standin' at the bows with lances ready, an' the harpooners hed got astern with their long steerin' oars; when all to onc't the line swished through the water, run taut in no time, the nose o' the boat dipped, the rope begun creakin' round the loggerhead, an' 'fore we knowed it we was cuttin' through the water like fury bound fur nobudy knowed how long a journey. Fur that whale hed sounded, an' somewhere down in deep water where we could n't meet him to dispute his path, he was rushin', rushin' on, an' on, an' on !

“ Well, we held onto the line, playin' out when we hed to an' haulin' in on it when we could. The wind seemed to have broke into a gale that took a man's breath. But all to onc't the line fell slack ; the boat shot over it in the water, then slowed down.

## OF THE PINES

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“‘Comin’ up, maybe,’ said the cap’n low and solemn-like. Soon the mate’s boat come alongside. ‘He’s long enough for us to come in on him together, Mr. Martin, if we can,’ was all the cap’n said.

“The race hed fetched up nigh to where the third boat hed gone in on the cow. While we was haulin’ in our slack line the second mate called out: ‘Iron got foul o’ that calf, sir, an’ it did n’t get fast to the cow. She’s sounded, fur all I can make out.’

“Every man o’ us set his eye on the cap’n. We knowed there was a big fight ahead. His face was powerful quiet.

“As we lay rockin’ on the water an’ keepin’ a sharp lookout — it wa’n’t many minutes, I s’pose, but it seemed hours — the second mate came nigher an’ said, ‘She was desp’rit wrathy, sir, as I was tryin’ to git the iron free. It

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

hed gone clean through the young un  
an' jabbed the old un's side. Can't  
say whether 't was the hole in her  
side or the iron in her baby that made  
her feel so bad; but she was desp'rit,  
sir, the last I seen o' her.'

" 'Cut away your iron, then,' said  
the cap'n, 'thout takin' his eye off the  
water, 'an' stand by to come in with  
your lance.' His voice was wondrous  
quiet-like as he said that.

" By the way line hed been comin'  
up, 't was clear we hed n't long to  
wait.

" 'Bl-o-o-ow, oh, Bl-o-o-ow!' rung  
out the second mate's voice. Then the  
water broke a little beyond his boat,  
an up comes that cow, churnin' the  
water into white suds. Then, so quick  
that purty nigh all hands broke out in  
a yell, up sprung the big feller at her  
side — more'n twice as big as she  
was — with a spout o' red foam, an'  
my two irons stickin' up out o' the

## OF THE PINES

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water. Then them two beasts made fur us !

“The roar o’ the sea as they flung their flukes an’ pounded the water drownded the voices o’ the cap’n an’ the mates so the men could scurce hear ’em in their own boats. The second mate got an iron fast to the cow, an’ she tore round till it ’peared like she ’d capsize ’em by the sea she raised. But the big feller dashed on.

“We hed hauled in on the line till our boat lay off ’bout his own length as he shot by us, haulin’ us round as he went. Suddenly he stopped an’ begun to feel after us, slappin’ the sea with great, thun’rous thwacks o’ his tail, turnin’ an’ turnin’ an’ snappin’ his jaws, clack, clack, like the sound o’ dry bones struck together. He rared up fur a spell an’ opened his jaws as wide as a barn door; then the monster dropped flat in the sea.

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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“Jest then at the cap’n’s orders all hands bent to the oars, an’ I held the boat with the steerin’ oar till she shot in on his flank ; then the cap’n went at him with the lance till the swirlin’, foamin’ water was red all round the boat. The mate joined him, an’ you should ‘a’ seen the cap’n’s lance swing then ! Onc’t the boat bumped ag’in’ the monster’s side, an’ the cap’n followed his lunge, an’ there he stood on the whale, hangin’ on to his lance stuck deep in his black bulk. I managed to get the boat’s head in so he leaped back to her bow.

“Soon we heerd the cap’n cry, ‘Starn, starn all, oh, starn !’ The men fell on the oars to get off. The quick eye o’ the cap’n hed seen that the battle was won an’ the black giant was settlin’ an’ soon would come to his flurry, which means he’d rip the sea, throwin’ hisself in a last fit, an’ then lay still furever.

## OF THE PINES

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“The boat’s crew understood an’ strained every muscle ; fur they had n’t furgot, ‘He’s extra length.’ But jest at that minute he swung his nigh eighty foot budy round, tail toward us, an’ swep’ his big flukes through the water with an up swing that hurled a flood clean over the boat. I felt a tremenjous shock jest as the water broke, but I could n’t see w’at it was fur the downpour.

“It ’peared like we ’d never get to see what hed happened. One spell I thought we was clean under the sea. Then all to onc’t some’ow I fell to thinkin’ o’ when I was a little feller up in North Truro on Cape Cod ; an’ soon I heerd my mother’s voice learnin’ me to say, ‘The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice ; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high—’ I heerd her voice that fur, then, oh, my God ! all in a minute there come pourin’

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

through my mind all the things I'd ever done since then — all in a rush, sir, an' 't was wuss than the noise an' rushin' o' the water ! An' then it was still ag'in' — still as the bottom o' the sea. An' then I heerd her voice onc't more : 'Now, say this — say it, Jason ; mother 'll help you, — say, *Whither — shall I — go — from thy spirit — or — whither shall I — flee from — thy presence. If I take — the wings — of — the morning — and dwell in the — uttermost parts — of the sea — even there'* — oh, sir, right there I heerd her voice cry out, ' *Won't you say that now, Jason ?*'

"Jest then I found I could see ag'in' ; an' God knows how wishful I was to git sight o' Cap'n Endicott !

"Then fur the fust time in years I fell to prayin'. But my eyes was wide open. Soon I saw the cap'n wa'n't in the boat. God alone can know how I prayed then ! Fur that tail-swoop o'

## OF THE PINES

the dyin' whale hed shore off the bow,  
an' hoisted the cap'n in air ; an' where  
he was not a man o' us could then  
make out.

" The whale was lyin' still ; his fight-  
in' days was done. The water, all red  
with his blood, was quietin' down some,  
when off to starb'rd I saw the cap'n  
come up, his arms hangin' limp. I  
was overboard in no time. The mates  
made fur where I was treadin' an'  
keepin' him afloat. Fur he was  
knocked speechless, an' hurt nobudy  
knowed how bad.

" Oh, 't was a sight to see them  
rough fellers liftin' the cap'n's big,  
helpless budy an' layin' him down  
gentle as a woman could in the bottom  
o' the first mate's boat. 'T was nigh  
sunset, an' the slant light glarin' on the  
bloody water made the men's faces  
flicker red an' ghastly. At last with  
achin' hearts we shipped the mast an'  
set sail, leavin' the second mate's boat

## SAINT ABIGAIL

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to make fast to our costly ketch. So we left that whale with all his extra length lyin' still furever, an' his mate an' the cap'n's splintered boat — all floatin' in the big red patch the sea would soon wash out. But there was a sorrow in our hearts that even the sea could n't wash away. Fur Cap'n Endicott's face tol' us better 'n words could, that he was done fur.

“So we headed fur the *Sea Gull* lyin' low in the water to wind'ard with three lights up an' down in her riggin' under a hollow moon. And all night long, while all hands worked cuttin' in them whale, the cap'n laid below ; an' he could n't speak a word, 'r raise a hand. Only he kep' movin' his eyes 's ef to say, ‘Homeward, make sail for home.’”

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### *Another Battle and a Victory*



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## X

### *Another Battle and a Victory*

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THE second month of sailing northward bound was dragging through its last week, and the *Sea Gull* was pushing on through pathless solitude.

The days had been wearisome enough on her decks and down below. The watches went on and off and trimmed sail and longed for home, while the good ship sped on and on, climbing the unending slope of the ocean's hill. There had come to be a mournful monotony in the sound of the ship's bell as it told off the watches — eight bells, two bells, four bells, six bells, eight bells; so it rang the hours of each watch, the same round of strokes over and over again, day and night. Doleful enough, indeed. For the captain lay below helpless as a babe, his wan

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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face wasting whiter and more unearthly week by week.

One morning Jason sat on the port bow keeping a sharp lookout for the speck in the sea's shimmer which would send him below with the longed-for words, "Bermuda sighted, sir." For he had been relieved from ship's duty and set to attend the captain since the home-bound voyage began.

There it was at last. It looked like a wee clump of cloud at first; then the little spot took on clear outlines. There was nothing else to show up so in all that waste of waters. It was Bermuda, and that meant that home shores were just ahead. Down below the seamen hurried.

"Are you sure, Jason?" said the pale man as his big eyes brightened on the pillow. "Are you sure? Go have another look, Jason,—look till you're sure; then come tell me what you can see."

## OF THE PINES



By and by the sailor went below again with his face beaming. "I can see the green o' the trees, sir, an' the white dots here an' there which is them clean lookin' houses they hev' in Bermuda ; an' 'fore I come below I made out that purty green o' the water inside the coral reefs."

"Then we're almost home, Jason." The captain closed his eyes as he spoke. He lay still and said no more. Soon Jason saw the blanket rising and falling with his breathing. As he watched the sleeper he heard the hurrying tread of the crew abovedeck, then the sound of the shifting of sails. The sailor sought the deck to feast his eyes on the sight that spoke the first word of home.

The wind had suddenly freshened, and rising out of the southeast under the sun was a black bank of cloud. The good ship lay over as the sails filled for the new tack and began to

## SAINT ABIGAIL

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quicken her tireless pace. So they sped on hour after hour.

Once about noon the captain wakened and Jason gave him a swallow or two of water. "I 'm heavy with sleep since we passed Bermuda," he said, as he lay back on the pillow whence Jason had raised his head. Then he closed his eyes. He seemed not to note the roll of the ship or to hear the creaking of her timbers and cordage. Jason left him in deep sleep.

As the day ended and four bells sounded the second dog watch, the ship was driving before a howling sou'-easter, pooping seas once and again and dipping her nose in the heave of the angered water. By midnight all hands were on deck ; even Jason took hold as he ran up now and then from his care of the captain.

The helpless man was now awake and calmly harking to all the wild sounds to be heard in a storm-beaten

## OF THE PINES

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ship on a midnight sea. His eyes shone out of his wasted face in the light of the little sperm-oil lamp swinging as the toiling ship rolled and lunged. The pounding of the waves against the ship's side was as if she crashed against rocks, save that her timbers did not burst and splinter.

“They’re keeping her well off shore, are they, Jason?”

“Well, out to sea yit, sir, an’ drivin’ no’thwest’ard like the wind.”

“What sail are they carrying?”

“Under bare poles, sir; maintopm’st overboard; stays’l set a spell ago, sir, to keep her from broachin’ to; can’t say ‘bout that now, sir.”

“And I hear the pumps at work, Jason?”

“These two hours, sir.”

“Can you be spared to stay by me, lad?”

“’T was the mate’s orders, sir, last time I come below; said fur

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

me not to leave you savin' as you ordered."

"Then I 'd like it if you 'll get that little Bible in my chest there."

Jason clung to the timbers of the cabin, got the book out and held it up where the captain could see it.

"That 's it. Can you find places in the Bible ?"

"I used to know how, sir. I know where the book o' Psalms used to be."

"That 's where I was wishing you to read from for me, Jason. Find the One Hundred and Seventh Psalm."

"My mother used to learn me some-  
thin' out o' that chapter o' Psalms, sir,  
an' I 'd orter find that."

Bracing his body against the wall near the swinging lamp, he fumbled the thin leaves, wetting his rough thumb while his voice told off the letters, x-c-i, x-c-ii, and so on to x-c-i-x. Then the captain said, "Go on, Jason ; c is the

## OF THE PINES

hundredth, you know; keep on turning till you come to c-v-ii."

"Here 't is, sir."

"Now, find the twenty-third verse."

"There 's a mark right by that verse, sir."

"Yes," said the captain, with a quick intake of breath. "Read as far as that mark goes," he added at last.

Jason's face lighted up as he saw words which he knew when a boy. So he began to read. The captain closed his eyes and lay listening while Jason's voice sounded amid the roar and crash of the embattled sea and the moans of the frenzied ship:

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

"These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep."

The bellowing of the assailing sea broke now into one resounding boom, and the ship seemed to stop stock-still under the spell of that crash.

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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Jason glanced at the captain's face. His eyes were opened, but that was all. Not knowing what else to do, he went on reading :

“ For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

“ They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths ; their soul is melted because of trouble.

“ They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.

“ Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

“ He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

“ Then are they glad because they be quiet ; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.”

The voice ceased.

“ The mark ends there, sir.”

There was no answer.

## OF THE PINES

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Jason stared open-eyed at the white face on the pillow. The sunken eyes were closed. His heart well-nigh stood still. Then he saw the slow rise and fall near the throat which told him the captain was still breathing. In his weakness he had sunk into sleep under the spell of the cherished passage.

Ere long Jason saw the thin lips move and heard a sound as of words. Crawling toward the sleeper and clinging to the bunk-board, he held his ear close to the captain's face. The ship lurched and rose with a long heaving of helplessness as Jason heard the words, —

“ It — matters — little — now — Lorena,  
Life’s — tide — is — ebbing — out — so — fast.”

The sailor sank on the floor like one smitten down by a blow death-laden.

As he lay there, he heard the voice

## S A I N T A B I G A I L.

of the dreamer, raised now as when a man cries out in his sleep :

“ ‘T was — not thy — woman’s — heart — that —  
spoke ;  
Thy heart — was — ever true — to me —”

There was a pause, with heavy breathing ; then the voice went on :

“ ‘A duty — stern and pressing — broke  
The tie — that linked — my soul — with thee.’ ”

“ ‘Hev mercy, O my God !’ ” cried the sailor, raising himself to his knees.

That piercing cry roused the sleeper.

“ Did you finish the verses, Jason ? ” asked the captain, gazing about in a brief bewilderment. “ I think I — lost myself in sleep. Did you read about ‘stilling the waves’ and ‘so he bringeth them unto their desired haven’ ? ”

“ I did, sir.” Then Jason braced himself to speak his heart ; but the captain went on :

## O F T H E P I N E S

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“Jason, if we never make port,—if she has found her match at last and I go down with her, and you being able-bodied keep afloat and get ashore—I want you to go to Ruth for me as soon as you can. Tell her I said she has been a good and loving wife,—and tell her I sent my gratitude and love. You won’t forget, Jason, will you?—gratitude and love.”

“Cap’n, may I say somethin’ ‘fore you trust me with that message?”

Jason took the captain’s limp hand and held it in both his own. “You was talkin’ in your sleep jest now, sir; an’ I done a wicked thing onc’t, an’ w’at you said broke me down; and I’ll go to the bottom with this old ship myself ‘fore I’ll go ashore with that sin unconfessed.”

A look of poise came in the captain’s face like that of the days of his manly strength.

“Say on, lad.”

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

“ You was talkin’ out o’ an old song in your sleep, sir. It was ‘bout ‘Lorena,’ and oh, sir, years ago I follered you one night, an’ I heerd that song sung to you, an’ I wanted you to marry my cousin Ruth. An’ the devil got into me when you asked me to carry that letter to Miss Abigail, an’ — cap’n, — God pity me — I changed them Bible verses you put in, sir, so she thought you’d throwed her overboard. But ‘fore she looked at her Bible, sir, she took a card out o’ her dress which was already writ on, an’ she give it to me an’ tol’ me to hurry with it to you ‘fore your ship got away — this poor old *Sea Gull* fightin’ her last battle now alone in the dark !

“ An’, cap’n, w’at I called up to you from the boat when you come aft wa’n’t w’at was on that card at all. ‘T was somethin’ altogether differ’nt, sir.”

Great glistening tears had trickled

## OF THE PINES

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down on the captain's quivering lips. With laboring helplessness he tried to speak, until at last these words came: "Can you remember what was on that card?"

"I never could furgit, God knows, sir. It has burned my eyes like hell flames since the hour that whale caught us foul and knocked the life out o' you."

"Tell me what it was, Jason."

"T was this, sir, — 'Ruth, 1: 16, 17. A. R.' "

"Find it! find it! — O Jason — find that! — quick!"

Captain Endicott's hands were shorn of power; as for Jason, his confession had shaken him until his trembling was pitiful as he braced himself against the ship's roll and plunge and began to search for the little book of Ruth. Many a time have the Bible's leaves trembled under the touch of the troubled; but never more than in that

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

night of storm under the glimmer  
of the little sperm light.

Suddenly he looked at the captain with blank dismay. He could not find Ruth. That moment was agony. But the gaze of those great eyes in the bunk seemed to steady him. Once more he began to turn the leaves. At last they opened to that name, Ruth. Then holding the book with a close clutch he began to read:

“Entreat me not to leave thee”—

The captain groaned and cried out, “Oh, there’s a mark by that, too,—we read that together one night.”

Then turning his face to the pillow now wet with his tears, he said, “Read on! read on!”

Peering through his tears, and steadyng hand and voice with a great effort, Jason sounded the words:

“For whither thou goest, I will go;  
and where thou lodgest, I will lodge:

## OF THE PINES

thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God :

“ Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried ” —

Here his speech broke and was stifled ; the cabin was voiceless. The thundrous boom of the sea against the ship’s side was followed by the rush of the water washing over the decks and the sullen splashing in the hold.

As Jason heard these sounds compassing him about, he felt that even the surging sea could not wash his soul clean, so foul was the sin of his youth, the heartless treachery, the festering selfishness, uncovered now at last. But somehow he found a kind of relief in having confessed all. And then he prayed.

After a time the captain turned up his face from the pillow. He saw the tousled hair of the sailor’s bowed head. A great compassion awoke within him. He fixed a wishful gaze on the peni-

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

tent. His fingers trembled as though he would lay his hand upon the head. But no, he was as one bound.

A moment later, between the waves leaping against the cabin skylight the gray of dawn caught his eye. His lips quivered as though driven from within to speak what they could not bear. But at last the heart of the man had its way. And these were the words that sounded in the little stateroom : “Jason, lad, look up ! *It is day-break !*”

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## XI

### *The Way of the Transgressor is Hard*

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## XI

### *The Way of the Transgressor is Hard*

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THROUGH the day that followed, the wind veered point by point until the gale roared up from the south, driving the vessel almost due north. The sea, weary at last of leaping upon the torn and moaning but still unyielding craft, now heaved around her in heavy wrath and flung her with sullen, pitiless scorn. The thud of the pumps never ceased.

The water was at last lowering somewhat in her hold, and the mate, drenched and clinging amid the splintered wreckage of the deck, began to hope that she might escape driving in on the Jersey coast and even outride the tempest.

It was a grim witness to the pluck of seafaring men when eight bells

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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sounded noon, though every man still able to stand was toiling on and on.

For hours Jason Cotter had been at the pumps. This labor was easing his heart of deeper waters than those flooding the decks and hold. For what salt surge is like unto the torrent in a man's breast when his sin and remorse break over his soul !

But this relief was only while he toiled. The moment he turned from the unsparing motion at the pumps, memory and grief and self-reproach rose within him as surely as the water in the hold when the pumps ceased, only far, far faster. And it would sink him, overwhelm him, as surely as the sea the ship ! But in what deeper abyss !

At the sound of eight bells Jason recalled his duty to the captain. Clinging to fast timbers and the life-line set for the purpose, he made his way along the leaping deck. Then there came

## O F T H E P I N E S

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into his mind words taught him in boyhood. It was as if a voice out of the storm had said, "*The way of transgressors is hard.*"

That moment marked the beginning of a great change. He grasped the timber by which he held himself on the upturned deck, straightened himself up as he was on his knees, and said, "God hev mercy, an' show me what to do, an' I'll do it."

Then he crawled below and peered into the captain's quarters. Richard Endicott lay with his eyes wide open. There was a look on his face void of dismay and strangely touched with light.

"How do we head now, Jason?"

"Runnin' 'fore the wind, sir, an'" — he peered out at the "telltale," as the cabin compass was called, before he added, "due no'th, 'r thereabouts, sir."

"Still well off shore?"

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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“No land sighted yit, sir, but nobudy knows how fur out to sea; ’t is powerful thick under our lee. Water lowerin’ now a bit in the hold, sir.”

“Then we may fetch up on the south shore — along about Seaconnet, maybe, or Martha’s Vineyard; or maybe we ’ll clear Nantucket and the Cape. Jason, lad, you may see Highland Light again yet.”

The captain was mindful of the sailor’s boyhood home in the village back from the ocean a mile or more beyond the white tower lifting its unfailing light on the bluffs of sand. But his heart was thinking also of another Light, and wishing that the sailor might see it flash out in the storm and dark.

Presently the captain bade him come close to his pillow. Jason obeyed, dropping to his knees.

“I think I will still trust you with that message to Ruth, Jason. When

## OF THE PINES

the fire of the Almighty has burned out a man's sin, and sorrow like yours has washed through his soul — Jason, that sin is done for ! So you 'll give that message to Ruth for me, won't you ? ”

“ If I ever set foot on shore, sir, I will, I will ! ”

“ Now you must go help those poor fellows keep the ship afloat. But, Jason, put that little Bible of mine in your pocket before you go. And when you get a chance, I want you to hunt out the place where it tells about One who stood on the deck of a fishing-vessel when the waves beat into the ship so that she was filling fast — stood there and said, ‘ Peace, be still.’ You 'll find a mark by it, somewhere in the fore part of the book called Mark. You can remember that way of finding it, can't you ? ”

“ Oh, sir, I won't furgit, I won't furgit,” was the pleading answer.

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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As the captain watched the book go into Jason's pocket, he added, "It ends like this: '*Even the wind and the sea.*' "

There was a pause. Both men heard the ceaseless throb of the pumps and the heavy wash of the sea along the ship's side.

"I'll keep you for only one thing more, Jason. I'm going to trust you with one more message."

The captain knit his brows and seemed to grapple with his thoughts.

"If you get to land, Jason, and if you are living when Ruth's life ends, and if Abigail is living, too, I want you to do this. But mind, lad, not until Ruth is no more. Do you understand?"

Jason raised himself to his feet. A light broke over his haggard face at the thought of doing something to make good as far as a man may the wrong of long ago.

## OF THE PINES

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“I understand, sir, an’ I ’ll do w’at you want me to,” he said.

“I want you to go then to Abigail, and tell her all you have told me. For she has thought—I know not what—of me, Jason, all these years! And I want you to tell her that I loved her through it all—loved her to the end.”

The white lips quivered and the voice failed. But the captain gathered all his flickering strength and added: “And ask her, Jason, to let you take care of her when she is old, and—and—if she can have it so, to let you make her grave beside Ruth’s and mine. Tell her I ask this that at least the last words of her message to me may come true.”

Then, speaking as if in a fond reverie, he repeated, “Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.”

There was another moment of suspense. At last Jason moved. Bend-

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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ing, he gently pressed his lips on the wasted brow. And before their faces parted, he said, "Cap'n, 'fore God I promise."

Then the great, calm eyes closed. And Jason went back to the pumps.



XII

The Highland Light



XII

The Highland Light

TWO days — four days — five days, they scarce knew how many, and nights of measureless blackness sweeping down and deepening the roar of the fury pounding the ship and bellowing afar ; on and on they were driving, and they knew not whither. The storm-wind had swept to the southeast again ; its frenzy had broken all bounds, and the whaler had long been shipping seas that made the vessel crouch to her gunwales and wallow groaning in the seething brine.

Long since in the wild dark, by the glare of a torch-dip held above the water splashing through the hold, they had carried the captain to the deck lest he be drowned in his berth. In the terror of the night they knew not

S A I N T A B I G A I L

that they bore his body only. And then — they scarce knew when — the ocean had lifted his unresisting form and had borne him from the *Sea Gull's* deck forever.

But the old whale-ship would not yield !

Clinging still to the foundering craft, a few famished men now watched the daylight glooming again to the night. The wind had veered to the east, though as yet they knew not by any sign of earth or sky whence came the fury's breath. A large carrot floating round the ship, like a waif of the world, was thrown up amid the deck's wreckage. They were gnawing it by turns with pitiful hunger and watching a long, white line of sand bluffs dimly looming ahead. At last they knew that they were driving on the shore of Cape Cod.

Now they could make out the white tower of Highland Light rising above

O F T H E P I N E S

the upper line of the long bluff with the clouds scurrying round it. And now, clear and steadfast as a star, the light broke forth. The keepers had set their evening watch!—first sign of mercy, first token that God's world still held men with pity and love in their breasts.

And so the night closed down on the booming seas off Highland Light.

The dull, cold light of daybreak was now in the air. Jason Cotter heard voices and felt the strength of arms about his body as he opened his eyes enough to see that the night was leaving the clouds. He could not make out how things were in his case, and thought he was dreaming. Feebly he clutched at something flapping against his head, with the old resolve of the sailor to cling to the last.

“ You 're all right, man—need n't hold on any longer,” a voice called kindly and close to his ear.

S A I N T A B I G A I L

This roused him and at length he began to know that men were carrying him — yes, they were clambering up the great sandy bluff.

The life-savers bore him to the deep hollow in the pasture-land south of the Light and laid him in the shelter of the thick clumps of bayberry. Then they went down the bluff again; for the vanquished old whale-ship was seen through the wild spray yielding up her trust of men and cargo for the sea to dash on the shore in its wrath.

Meanwhile the villagers and the families of the light-keepers were hurrying over the Highland pastures, bringing blankets and warm drinks and food, with the solace of their own warm hearts; and at length the light began to come back in the glassy eyes.

Then Jason Cotter looked about him and knew that he was home again, out of the depths of the sea at last. There in the little crowd gathered from the

OF THE PINES

village were faces of men he had not seen for years ; and round him lay the rolling Highland ground, where often as a boy he had loved to stand watching the ships glide by to the ports beyond his sight. There he had often longed to go with them.

Then there came in his heart the joy that no man can put into words — the strange joy of one who as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief is driven back home by life's storm, and finds himself once more as a little child, feeling the touch of the love that is on earth and the deeper enfold-ing of the love in heaven.

XIII

*“Even the Wind and the
Sea”*

XIII

“Even the Wind and the Sea”

“**T**HERE’S where we found him, lyin’ on the sand in the lee o’ that rock there,” said the old man, breaking away from the spell of the tale he had been telling. He brushed his tear-wet face with the back of his hand, as he stood pointing to the long rock called by dwellers in those parts “Half-Way Rock.” You may find it any day by noting the chief in that picket-line of boulders which stand with their feet in the sea keeping guard on the shore of Seaconet.

“There’s where we found him,” he repeated ; “an’ there’s where we laid him,” pointing now back to the Seaconet burying-ground. I could see the elm tree in the midst of its quietness lifting its arms under the glow of

S A I N T A B I G A I L

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a sunset sky as if to keep a ceaseless benediction over the clustered stones. Then his hand fell to his side and his head dropped on his breast. But after a moment he went on.

“ An’ then fur many a year I kep’ watch that Ruth should want fur naught. An’ many a summer’s day I come with her to carry fresh earth an’ water fur the flowers she kep’ a growin’ on his grave. An’ somew’at oft she told me how a lady hed sent her a little letter comfortin’ her, an’ some flowers ’r sometimes flower seeds fur her husband’s grave. Oh, that made the years weariful fur me! But I kep’ on carin’ fur Ruth.

“ I was cap’n o’ a mack’rel schooner in them days, so I would never be long out o’ port. The lady come to see Ruth after a spell, an’ she an’ Ruth seemed to love one another. An’ one day I saw her. She was settin’ with Ruth by that same little parlor window

## OF THE PINES

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where I used to watch the lamp years before. That sight made the tears come — I could n't help it. So I fell to weedin' Ruth's flower-beds.

“By 'n' by I heerd her singin' soft-like inside with Ruth. The voice sounded out by the flower-beds so 's I heerd what she sung. It was ‘Jesus, Lover of my Soul,’ an' all 'bout flyin' to his bosom while the tempest is high and the billows roll, and his guidin' 'em at last into the haven when the storm o' life is past.

“I could n't see the flowers fur the tears that was droppin' on 'em ; but God knows how glad I was them two lone women loved each other ! An' I kep' on weeding Ruth's flower-beds.

“Things went on so nigh twenty years ; an' I stood my watch lest Ruth should want fur somethin' I could send her way. Then one day we laid Ruth alongside her husband.

“That very night I went an' stood

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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by them two graves. Fur I knowed I could n't keep my promise if I did n't. Somethin' kep' sayin' to me on the way, 'Why not let bygones be bygones ?' an' then 't was, 'Wait a while, anyhow !' But I did n't listen nur turn back.

"The wind begun whisperin' hard in my ear as I stood by Cap'n Richard's grave ; then I heerd the sea callin' through the dark. The elm tree creaked in the wind an' made me mindful o' the ship's timbers the night I promised. Then I took off my cap, an' 'fore I knowed it I was sayin' out loud, 'Jason Cotter will keep his word an' be true to ye this time, cap'n.' An' I did.

"The very next day I set out 'long the north road. 'T was gettin' dark as I sighted the clump o' tall pines on the road goin' off toward the shore. When I turned in to go up to her door, I saw the tree — the very one I stood under

## OF THE PINES

that night more 'n thirty years back ; only 't was bigger now an' rough lookin'. A window was open an' some one was playin' quiet-like on the piano an' singin' a bit now an' then in the dark. 'T was a woman's voice. An' I could tell from the sound o' it that she was alone.

“ ‘ I knowed you an’ Ruth Endicott was frien’s, an’ so you would n’t mind my comin’, ’ I begun.

“ Then when she spoke gentle to me, an’ I hed told her how I hed sailed many a year with Cap’n Endicott, an’ she hed listened a while ’s ef wond’rin’ some why I’d come but smilin’ kind-like as I talked on, I said : ‘ An’ you won’t mind, will ye, ef I say I knowed you an’ the cap’n used to be friends — an’ ef I tell the message he give me fur ye ? ’

“ The smile went out like a candle in a puff o’ wind.

“ ‘ But, my poor man, he died twenty years ago,’ she said.

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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“ ‘But Ruth was laid in her grave only yesterday,’ I answered.

“ She set lookin’ at me a spell without a word.

“ Then I took out the cap’n’s little Bible. It was so warped an’ stiff from the salt water that night off Highland Light I feared she would n’t know it; so I found that place the cap’n hed told me ’bout — fur I knowed that best o’ all — an’ I put my finger on the mark under the words, ‘Even the wind and the sea.’

“ She looked hard where that mark was. Then her head bowed low an’ was still.

“ As I set there holdin’ the little book open, an’ not knowin’ what else to do, I took note her hair was like dark waves an’ there was spots o’ white here an’there. Some’ow it made me think o’ the sea when the wind has been blowin’ stidy fur days with a long sweep. Then I saw tears droppin’ on her clasped hands.

## OF THE PINES

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“By ‘n’ by she looked up with grief-weary eyes — looked straight into mine, an’ then all she said was, ‘Go on, Jason.’ ‘T was the fust time she’d called me Jason, an’ somehow it sounded wondrous comfortin’. So I begun.

“I tol’ her ‘bout that night in the storm at sea an’ how the cap’n give me his message to Ruth an’ then how ‘t was he give me a message fur her. I said it just as he tol’ me to, ‘Tell her I loved her through it all — loved her to the end.’ And then I did n’t stop. I tol’ her how I hed changed the Bible verses in the letter I brought her, an’ how I hed lied ‘bout what was on her card as the *Sea Gull* was puttin’ out to sea. An’ I tol’ how that night in the storm the cap’n hed said over in his sleep some words from the song she used to sing fur him, an’ how that broke me down so I could n’t let him die without her message. An’ then I

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

come to how wishful he was that leastwise the last words might come true an' she be laid beside him an' Ruth — when all was over. An' through it all she set a-listenin' an' — an' ” —

There was a quick silence. Captain Cotter's eyes were still fixed on mine; but the drawn lips pulsed soundless with each breath. Then out of the silence he raised his blunt hand and stood mute while the toil-worn fingers trembled above his head. And what is more pitiful than old fingers!

Without lowering his hand he at last forced sound to the quavering lips. Brokenly these words came out into the still air: “When I stand up, sir, in the Judgment Day — an' tell out all I've ever done — I know — I'll rec'lect that night — an' her eyes — a-lookin' at me — an' a-listenin'! An' I mean to speak up then — humble-like — an' say, ‘Yes, God, I tol' her all — I kep' my word! ’ ”

# XIV

## *A Vision Beautiful*





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## XIV

### *A Vision Beautiful*

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HOW long Captain Cotter stood in silence has never been clear in my memory. I recall only that my thoughts were brooding on his gentleness in uncovering Miss Abigail's grief, when with a start I became aware that he was trying to speak but could not utter a word. My first concern was for the unfinished tale, so eager had I become to hear its end. What if he should be overcome now and leave the mystery of those words on the gravestone untold? A keen desire sprang up, like a blue flame, amid my glowing sympathies, to hear how the strange words, "Who should have been the wife," came to be so used.

Suddenly his bent form shook; his eyes were drenched; his voice was engulfed with sobs. He swung his arms

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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across his back and turned away. As he tottered off I saw the tattooed wrist clutched once more by his knotty fingers.

Dumbness bound me. How could I stay such a surge in an old man's breast!

I watched him rambling with bowed head among the bayberry bushes. Now and then he took a far gaze seaward. It was a sight to make a man look through tears, as he stood sky-covered in the stillness of Seaconnet shorelands, an old heart at bay before its rushing memories.

Recollections of the only time I ever saw Abigail Rockwell were stirring my thoughts, and they were like a breeze laden with the breath of pines. "Tell him of her," some good angel whispered.

In hope of easing his laboring heart I strolled toward him.

"Captain, I saw Miss Abigail once."

## OF THE PINES

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He looked up with a wordless gaze.

“She was nearly eighty then ; I’d like to tell you of the talk we had.”

The old man was looking into the offing, but he seemed to be listening.

I did not forget to speak of the beds of asters and marigolds that lined the walk to her door. I told of the bit of lace that covered her thin white hair as she received us in her quiet room, and of the ancient piano back of her chair, and how she smiled playfully and said she used to sing “when it was in its prime” ; told him, too, of the little table beside her, how it was filled with books, and how she put her hand upon them as if caressing them, and said they had lain on that table since they were left there by the hands that wrote them.

The easing of the captain’s face was good to look upon ; but he spoke not a word.

Then I ran on in still cheerier tone.

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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“ She seemed to have no end of sunny memories,” said I. “ She told at one time of a June morning when she was barely twenty. It was the Sabbath, and one of her father’s friends, a courtly gentleman well known in the state’s affairs, met her on the church steps, bowed very low with gallantry and said, ‘ How do you do this morning, my sweet virgin?’ She smiled over the memory ; and as she spoke that last word a light broke in her eyes, warm and shadowless. It made me wonder why such a woman had lived unwedded.”

The captain’s brow was drawn as by pain. I hastened to speak of other things.

“ After a time she leaned toward us, with her slender hands clasped in her lap, and talked of the friends of her womanhood ; she told of visits in that very room with her friend of Amesbury and her friend of Concord, as she

## OF THE PINES

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called them half playfully. Then to please us she repeated words which these and other men of deathless names had uttered there. Captain," said I, "it was as if she were lifting the leaves of her old vines out in the sunshine and plucking clusters of winey grapes for us."

The old man smiled now. He started to speak.

"Can ye rec'lect anything 'bout w'at her friends said when they come to see her?"

He seemed to know what was coming each time I started to repeat some treasure of words. He would stand with his head turned to take it in, smiling as he listened. Ere long it was clear that I was only opening the dim treasure-house of his own memories.

Dear heart! Did any of those great men who delighted in her gladsomeness ever guess what she did when they were gone? Did any of them

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

ever dream that the old man into whose beggared spirit she carried the riches of their speech had robbed her life of its most human joy?

While this query was kindling my thought the captain said, “ ‘T was a wondrous big man who said some words to her onc’t ‘bout the clod and the diamond with the sunlight on ‘em. Miss Abigail was past seventy when he come down from Boston one summer day, young and happy as a boy. By ‘n’ by she come out with him where I was workin’ in the flower-beds, an’ he shook hands with me an’ said some words, kind-like, but so fast I could n’t think o’ w’at to say. An’ she tol’ me after he was gone w’at he said to her ‘bout the clod takin’ in the sunlight an’ the diamond givin’ it out.”

I did not tell Captain Cotter how the words Miss Abigail repeated to him had gone through the world since then in the pages of the great sermon;

## OF THE PINES

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for I was wishing to lead him back to his story.

So I told him how as she talked of that saying the rays of the setting sun flooded the window and covered her dear old form, and how as we arose to go she gave us her hand, her face beaming kindly as she said, "There's plenty of sunshine to make your lives bright, if only you yourselves are like jewels instead of clods."

"So we left her, captain, standing by her old piano and the table with its books, all in the warm glow of the October sunset. Out by the gate one who has been with me in many a path since then, said in a whisper, 'Look! Saint Abigail of the pines!' I turned, and what a picture, captain! She was standing in the door, her form framed in its sunlit lines. And the light of sunset lay on her white hair."

"Ah, sir," said the old man, with musing eyes, "the spell o' the sky was

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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on her, wa'n't it ! I al'ays thought so — the spell o' the sky was on her ! ”

“ As we drove away, captain, I took one more look. She had gone from the door. The small-paned windows were ruddy in the sun's last rays. The old dwelling was the picture of peace. And back of all its quietness I saw an old man milking her two cows.”

“ Yes,” said Captain Cotter. And the voice was like that of one lost in a pleasant dream.

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**XV**

*All's Well*

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## XV

### *All's Well*

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“THE fust time I ever got sight o’ ye,” the captain began, returning to his story, “was the day you be’n tellin’ of. I hed be’n carin’ fur her and her place a good many years then. Fur I wanted to do the little I could to offset the wrong I’d done. She was al’ays wondrous kind to me ; but naught she did or said was half so comfortin’ as her trustin’ me the way she did.

“T wa’n’t long after that visit o’ yours — a year ’r thereabouts — that the end come. An’ when she was dead her friends found a little letter under her pillow. It told ’em how she had loved ’em and how good they had been to her. An’ then it said she wanted to be buried quiet-like, an’ that

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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her friend, Jason Cotter, knew all about her wishes, an' she wanted them to let him do it all just as he might say. The letter ended this way, 'He understands; he will keep his word. This is my last wish.'

"So we laid her in yon' buryin'-ground beside Ruth and Richard. I waited a spell, and then I hed a stone made fur her grave. I wanted to do somethin' that would stand when I was gone, witnessin' to the sea yonder and the open sky; an' I wanted it to make right the wrong I 'd done as fur as that could be. So I hed a stone made, an' I put them words on it:

'Here lies the body  
of  
ABIGAIL ROCKWELL  
who should have been the wife  
of  
CAPT<sup>NY</sup> RICHARD ENDICOTT.'

"Then I thought 'bout Richard. An' I wanted to make it right fur him,

## OF THE PINES

too, as fur as I could. But I did n't know what to put on the stone fur that. So one day I was readin' in the Bible an' I come to that story 'bout Abigail. An' I loved that name so that I read it over an' over. An' all to onc't I found the very words to say w'at I could n't say fur myself. They was wondrous comfortin' to me. So I hed 'em cut at the bottom o' the stone fur Miss Abigail's grave."

His voice fell to the hush of prayer as it sounded the words :

“ The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God.”

The old man stood peering into my face in silence. An impulse seized me to take his trembling hand in mine.

As we stood thus he said, “ When I'm gone, I want ye to see that my old budy's laid at the foot o' them three graves I showed ye. An' I

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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want ye to put on my stone some words, whatever ye think 'll do ; only let 'em be words that 'll show I was a seafarin' man, an' that all 's well."

Slowly he turned away and stood looking seaward. Ere long his eyes became fixed and I followed his gaze. There was a single white sail on that line of light where sea and sky keep their ceaseless tryst at evening.

"They are passed away as the swift ships," he murmured.

The marvel deepened that such a one as he had come to know the hidden treasures of the sacred page so fondly that he coined his speech from their fine gold. But I had not yet seen the full wonder-work of Abigail Rockwell's love.

Still speaking to himself, he went on. "But I 'm landlocked here a spell yit,—an' the harbor bar 's be'n gettin' bigger year by year, an' 't is wondrous fearsome to me now to think

## OF THE PINES

o' puttin' out to sea alone,—fur tho'  
I 've been makin' ready to sail fur  
many a year 's well 's I could, I know  
I could never git out into open water  
seaworthy but fur w'at she told me  
about."

As he said these things, his eyes  
peered seaward under the arch of his  
hand.

A moment more and his voice was  
heard again. He seemed to have for-  
gotten me, and was softly singing :

"In the — beauty — o' the lilies — Christ —  
was born — across — the sea,  
With a — glo-ry — in his — bosom — that trans-  
figers — you an' — me."

Ere long he turned about, threw his  
arms across his back, and started from  
the shore. For the light of evening  
time was on land and sea.

I followed with a great desire. The  
words he had spoken before turning  
toward his cottage had set me thinking

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

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of a song of the sea whose cadence had but lately fallen on the heart of the world. I was wishing that he might hear its peaceful music while the night closed in on Seaconnet and the sea ; for I knew the day was far spent for him, and that he was in a desert place for human comfort.

So it was that we reached a little hilltop without speaking. The waters drew their lifted circle round us on all sides but one. Here the captain paused. Then I began telling him of an old man over the waters ; "a man about your own age, captain," said I. "Not long ago he wrote a song of the sea."

Feeling in his blouse pocket he said, "D'ye mean 'Crossin' the Bar'?" He drew forth a worn portion of a Boston newspaper. "Did a old man write them words? Old as I be?"

I was looking at the bit of paper in the shadows, and wondering to find

## OF THE PINES

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the magic lines thereon, when he said, "Somebody sent me that. I've read it over till I can say it now when the paper wears out."

Just then I made out a dim pencil mark over the stanzas and beside it the letters, "P. B." Then I knew that "the wondrous big man who come down from Boston one summer day" had not forgotten the old man working in the flower-beds.

So it was that there on that little hilltop, while the gloaming gathered, these words were spoken in the sweet air of Seaconnet :

"Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me !  
And may there be no moaning of the bar  
When I put out to sea."

"That sounds 's ef he was a-waitin' in some place out on the open shore like Seaconnet," said the captain, "some place where he could watch

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

the sunset an' see the evenin' star  
come out — an' hear the sea breakin'  
on the bar like I 've done here many a  
nightfall. An' he was a-wishin' there'd  
be no moanin' o' the bar when his  
time come, wa'n't he ? Yes, I under-  
stand ; fur then it'd be full tide ; 't was  
full tide he was a-wishin' fur, this old  
man. Old 's I be, was he ? ”

For answer I only repeated the  
next lines :

“ But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless  
deep  
Turns again home.”

“ Yes, that 's it,” the captain broke  
in ; “ a seafarin' man feels like the full  
tide was a old friend o' his comin' in  
from its home where he 's goin'. An'  
he ain't so lonesome when it moves  
'long by his ship, speakin' up to him  
quiet-like while the dark comes down  
on the water an' he looks back an'

## OF THE PINES

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sees the lights on shore goin' out one by one. 'T is wondrous comfortin', sir, to a old seafarin' man, the full tide is, when it hushes the moanin' o' the bar an' says, 'Come ! come !' the way it 's sayin' now all round Seaconnet."

Wondering what meaning his old eyes would see in the shifted setting of the song, I quoted :

"Twilight and evening bell  
And after that the dark!"

His voice sounded close to my face in the shadows as he took up the words in a deep whisper :

"And may there be no sadness of farewell  
When I embark."

He looked straight into my eyes. At last he said, "That sounds 's ef he had to go to the harbor town to ship, too, don't it—down where a man hears bells as the evenin' comes on,

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

an' the voices o' friends 'fore he sails.  
Yes, a man can't put off fur the long,  
long sail from a lone shore, can he?  
'Tis a good world with harbors an'  
friends in it, sir, an' bells soundin' at  
nightfall. 'An' after that the dark !'  
Yes — after that !"

Then I knew what a victory over  
despair had been fought out in his  
old breast.

"And after the evening bell, then  
what, captain ?"

He turned and looked seaward  
through the gloom. Standing so, he  
repeated the words,—

"For though from out our bourne of Time and  
Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar."

Then he seemed to forget me for  
a time. Soon, in a voice sweet with

## OF THE PINES

childlikeness, he said, "That old man over in England knowed that too, did n't he?" After a pause he went on: "That's w'at Miss Abigail used to tell me. 'There's a Pilot that will be with you, Jason,' she'd say oft-times. An' now an' then she'd tell me, 'No matter if you don't see him ashore, Jason; he'll come aboard when you put to sea; an' when you've crossed the bar you'll see him face to face.' "

Then the voice was very sweet and low in the Seaconnet twilight as he said:

"When that time comes, sir, the fust thing I'll say to him 'll be, 'T was Miss Abigail tol' me to trust you the way I hev.' An' then I mean to kneel down right there on the deck like old Peter did, an' say, 'I am a sinful man, O Lord, but you won't leave me now fur that, will you?'

## S A I N T A B I G A I L

Miss Abigail told me you would n't.'  
An' then I know he 'll say, ' Fear not,  
Jason.' Fur ef it were not so she  
would 'a' tol' me!"

The voice ceased. And it was  
night all round about in Seaconnet.

• • • • •  
In the little burying-ground in that  
pleasant nook of land beside the  
sounding sea, there is now a grave  
hard by three that lie side by side.  
You may stand in the hush of their  
quietness any summer day. Over you  
the elm tree will lift its benediction,  
and all round about the pasture slopes  
of Seaconnet will be sweet with the  
sea's breath and the warm sunshine  
and the scent of bayberry. Peace  
covers all things about the spot that  
marks the keeping of the tryst. And  
if you would hear the last word of the  
tale, you will find it there. For on  
the stone whose mound is at the foot

## OF THE PINES

of the three that lie side by side, are these words:

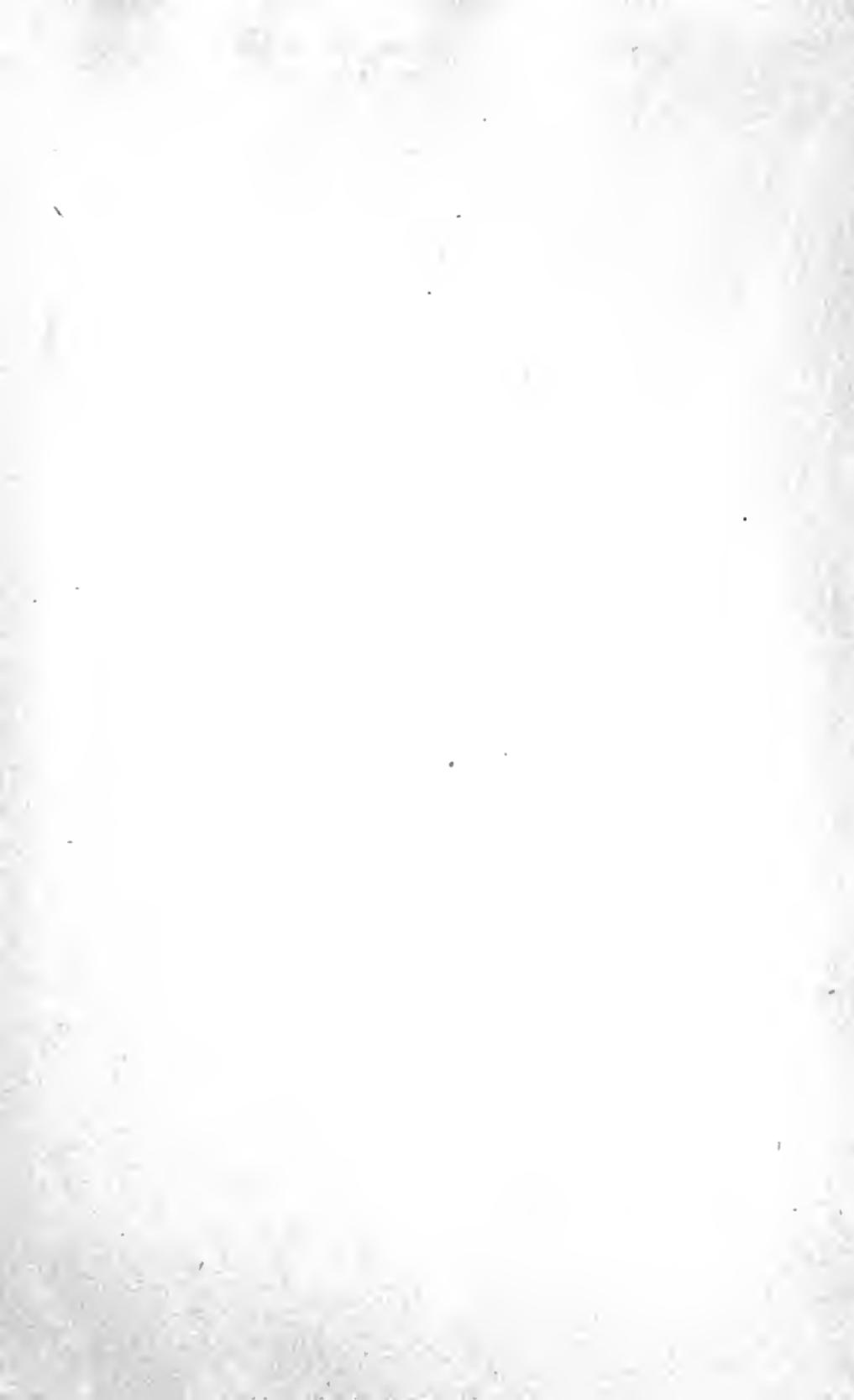
HERE LIES THE BODY  
OF  
CAPT. JASON COTTER  
WHO DIED DEC. 25, 1890,  
AGED 82 YRS.

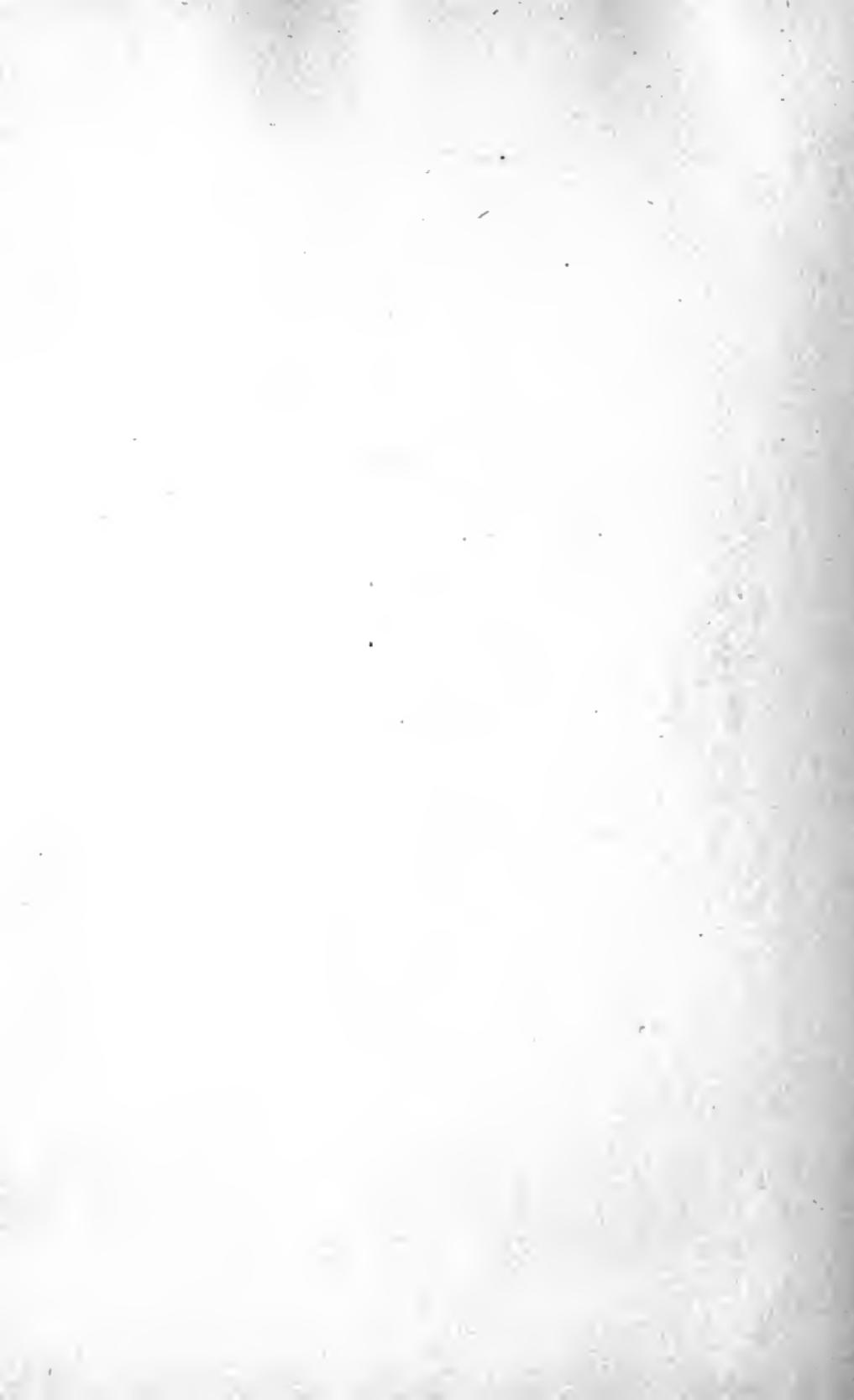
“I saw as it were a glassy sea  
. . . and them that come off victorious . . .  
standing by the glassy sea  
having harps of God.”











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